TWENTY-EIGHTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

A crisis can bring someone into recovery from lust, but crisis alone cannot sustain it. The consequences may become impossible to ignore, or secrecy may simply become too exhausting to carry. That pain can open the door. Lasting freedom asks for something deeper: a willingness to accept a different way of living.

Sunday's gospel gives us the image of a king preparing a wedding feast for his son (Matthew 22:1–14). When the first guests refuse to come, the king sends his servants into the streets and gathers *"all they found, bad and good alike"* until the hall is filled (Matthew 22:10). The invitation is wide. No one has to become impressive before being welcomed.

That is good news for anyone carrying shame around sexual sin or compulsive behavior. Recovery does not begin after we have cleaned ourselves up. We come because we need mercy. We enter a fellowship where honesty can replace secrecy and discover again that Christ has not withdrawn His invitation.

Jesus then introduces the guest who arrives without a wedding garment. This part of the parable reminds us that grace is not permission to remain unchanged. We are welcomed as we are, but recovery eventually asks whether we are willing to live in a way that reflects the freedom we have been given.

In lust addiction recovery, that willingness reaches deeper than avoiding obvious behavior. We begin learning how to relate to desire differently. A thought does not have to become fantasy, and loneliness does not have to send us toward escape. We allow the truth to reach the places where secrecy once gave us permission to live a divided life.

Simply attending meetings is not enough if we keep protecting the habits that feed the addiction. At some point, cooperation with grace becomes concrete. We tell the truth sooner and accept the safeguards we once resisted. We become more willing to ask for help before temptation has gathered strength. As trust grows, accountability begins to feel less like restriction and more like protection for the life we actually want. Over time, chastity begins to feel less like deprivation and more like integration.

Saint Paul speaks to the stability this kind of recovery can produce. He says, *"I know how to live in humble circumstances; I know also how to live with abundance"* (Philippians 4:12). Then he says, *"I can do all things in him who strengthens me"* (Philippians 4:13). Paul has learned not to let circumstances determine his spiritual center.

That lesson is important here. Temptation can intensify when life is difficult, but comfort can also make us careless. When the immediate crisis passes, we may convince ourselves that we no longer need the same honesty or accountability. Long-term recovery asks us to remain rooted in Christ when life feels stable, not only when we are afraid of losing everything.

Psalm 23 gives this Sunday a quiet backdrop: *"You spread the table before me"* (Psalm 23:5). Lust tells us there is always something more we need to consume. God invites us to receive instead. His grace is not scarce, and our deepest hunger is not answered by taking more.

God does not ask us to become worthy before approaching Him. He invites us into mercy and then teaches us how to live from it. Recovery continues as we let that invitation reshape our desires and the way we love. Christ remains enough in both struggle and stability, and His grace can form in us a freedom that no hidden life could ever provide.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Where are you still relying on fear of consequences rather than a deeper desire to live differently?
- What has helped you remain rooted in recovery when the urgency of the original crisis begins to fade?
- How is Christ inviting you to move from merely avoiding lust toward becoming more integrated and capable of authentic love?

MASS READINGS

FIRST READING Isaiah 25:6-10a
RESP. PS. Psalm 23:1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6
SECOND READING Philippians 4:12-14, 19-20
GOSPEL Matthew 22:1-14

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