

## Fourth Sunday of Lent



A central theme of this Sunday's liturgy is the gift that has been freely given to us by God through his Son, Jesus Christ. His life, death, and resurrection have earned our freedom and salvation—something we cannot merit ourselves. We get the chance to encounter freedom from the chains of addictions, compulsions, and the effects of unhealthy attachments when we open our eyes to this divine truth:

*God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so everyone who believes in him might have eternal life.*

The Twelve Steps of recovery and the sacraments of the Catholic Church provide a framework to receive God's grace. When they operate together, we can experience a deeper appreciation for the gift of Jesus Christ who is made present through the sacraments.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation was instituted by the resurrected Christ. "Receive the Holy Spirit," Jesus said to his apostles. "Whose sins you forgive are forgiven, and whose sins you retain are retained." By preparing to meet our Lord in confession, we participate in an act of conversion and practice turning our will and life over to the care of God.

We do not turn to God in this way to be condemned. Instead, our confession is an acknowledgment of His grace that saves us. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* reads, "In a profound sense it is also a 'confession'—acknowledgment and praise—of the holiness of God and of his mercy toward sinful man" (1424).

Embracing the Sacrament of Reconciliation overlaps with the spiritual essence of the Twelve Steps. A searching and fearless moral inventory (Step 4) leads us to admitting to God, ourselves, and another the exact nature of our wrongs (Step 5). A contrite and repentant heart (Step 6) moves us to prayerfully ask God to remove the character defects that stand in the way of serving Him and others (Step 7). Given proper spiritual direction, we consider those we've harmed (Step 8) and make amends to them, except when to do so would injure them or others (Step 9).

Conducting ourselves in this manner and making a daily commitment to remain in God's grace brings a life of joy and peace. Let us give thanks to God for the magnificent gift of life and faith as we hear from a portion of this Sunday's Gospel Reading:

*Jesus said to Nicodemus:*

*"Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert,  
so must the Son of Man be lifted up,  
so that everyone who believes in him may have  
eternal life."*

*For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son,  
so that everyone who believes in him might not perish  
but might have eternal life.*

*For God did not send his Son into the world to  
condemn the world,  
but that the world might be saved through him."*

## Reflection Questions

- How do the sacraments of the Catholic Church influence your participation in 12-step recovery?
  - How do the Twelve Steps of recovery influence your participation in the sacraments of the Catholic Church?
- What gifts are you grateful for today?
- How have you experienced mercy from God and others?

### Additional Resources Available Online

*Find life-saving addiction recovery resources that blend 12-step spirituality with Catholic faith*

- Stay updated on events, opportunities, and resources by signing up for the CIR monthly newsletter
- Explore virtual CIR meetings and prayer groups
- Find information about starting a new CIR group
- Shop for books, meeting materials, and merchandise
- Read testimonies and articles on important topics
- Visit **[www.catholicinrecovery.com](http://www.catholicinrecovery.com)** today

## Sunday Mass Readings this Week

**First Reading:** 2 Chronicles 36:14-16, 19-23

**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 137:1-2, 3, 4-5, 6

**Second Reading:** Ephesians 2:4-10

**Gospel:** John 3:14-21