

Third Sunday of Easter



Easter is not simply a day to celebrate our Lord's Resurrection but a season that lasts 50 days and invites us to enter the fullness of God's mystery. We put our faith in a Higher Power who has been raised from the dead, glorified, and resurrected. This has nothing to do with ghosts, fantasies, mythology, wish-fulfillment, or disembodied spirits. It is much more than an abstraction of good will, kindness, and respect.

Our efforts to seek recovery from addictions, compulsions, and unhealthy attachments require engagement with more than a ghost. Like the disciples encountering Jesus after the Resurrection, we get support from God who dwells among us today. We get a personal encounter with Christ by relying on others, the body of Christ living and breathing in the world. We get direct contact with God through the sacraments that heal and strengthen us along the way.

We have an Advocate above, continually knitting the fabric of heaven and earth together. In recovery, we rely on the body of Christ to turn away from our sinfulness and devote ourselves to spiritual progress. Somewhere in the process, we begin to truly love God with all our heart, mind, and soul. The love we extend to our neighbor and ourselves is a fruit of experiencing God's unending love for us.

As Easter people, we rejoice in our risen Lord but shall not forget the pain and sacrifice experienced by Jesus for the sake of our own resurrection and freedom from death. By denying ourselves of our own self-seeking desires, one day or moment at a time, we may acknowledge the suffering that we long covered up with the pursuit of unhealthy substances or behaviors. This pruning process will inevitably come with suffering in the form of mental, emotional, or spiritual anguish.

In many cases, we have conditioned ourselves to avoid small moments of suffering by acting out or reaching for our drug of choice. Addiction forms when that conditioning overrides the personal choices that we have, making our lives unmanageable and diminishing our ability to love God, ourselves, or our neighbor. Acting against the grain of our own urges is a difficult but necessary part in trusting that God will restore us to sanity. Every victory over discouragement gives an increase in spiritual courage.

This Sunday's Second Reading from the First Letter of Saint John describes God doing for us what we cannot do for ourselves:

*If anyone does sin,
we have an Advocate with the Father,
Jesus Christ the righteous one.
He is expiation for our sins,
and not for our sins only but for those of the whole
world.
The way we may be sure that we know him is to keep
his commandments.
Those who say, "I know him,"
but do not keep his commandments are liars,
and the truth is not in them.
But whoever keeps his word,
the love of God is truly perfected in him.*

Therefore, we seek comfort with Christ as our advocate and God as our acquitter. We do not need all the answers and are instead called to grow in trust rather than clarity. Free from addiction and loved by God, we can align ourselves with the words of Saint Paul to the Romans:

*For I am convinced that neither death, nor life,
nor angels, nor principalities, nor present things,
nor future things, nor powers, nor height, nor depth,
nor any other creature will be able to separate us
from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Reflection Questions

- What kind of pruning have you gone through to overcome the obsessions, impulses, urges, and attachments associated with your old addictive/compulsive behavior?
- How have you learned to trust and love God through recovery despite past and present suffering?
- How has your experience with God's love spilled over into love for your neighbor and yourself?

Scripture in Recovery

Learn new ways to integrate Scripture into 12-step recovery during this month's webinar

- Tuesday, April 16 at 6:00p ET/3:00p PT
- Fr. Charlie Becker will guide attendees to apply Scripture to our experience in recovery
- Learn to uncover God's will for you through His Word and truths contained in the Bible
- For more information and to register visit:
catholicinrecovery.com/webinars-workshops

Sunday Mass Readings

First Reading: Acts 3:13-15, 17-19

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 4:2, 4, 7-8, 9

Second Reading: 1 John 2:1-5

Gospel: Luke 24:35-48