

Sixth Sunday of Easter



The Church's Mass readings this Sunday are all about love. In fact, it's a word we will hear ten times in a short selection from the First Letter of Saint John and nine times in this Sunday's Gospel Reading. Love is a word and concept that tends to be distorted for many who struggle with lust addiction, sexual compulsions, and unhealthy attachments. Many of us enter recovery with a twisted idea of what love is.

Dr. Peter Kleponis, a leading Catholic clinical therapist who specializes in addiction, notes five core beliefs that develop in the mind of an addict:

- I'm not loveable
- If people really knew me, they would reject me
- I can't count on anyone, including God, to meet my needs
- I need to find something that I can control that will meet my needs
- Feeding my addiction (whatever it is) is my greatest need and source of comfort

We can grow in our capacity to love by prayerfully considering the words Jesus shared during the Last Supper dialogue taken from the Gospel of John. What matters most is not how we love God and others; it is that God loves us. Our acceptance of that is an offer of love back to Him. From Sunday's gospel reading we hear:

Jesus said to his disciples:

"I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and your joy might be complete.

This is my commandment:

love one another as I love you.

No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends.

You are my friends if you do what I command you. I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master is doing.

I have called you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father.

It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name he may give you.

This I command you: love one another."

In a community of believers, we are given hope and a place to be accepted, regardless of the path that brought us here. Upon receiving love from others who have been in a similar position, we can begin to turn our gaze toward God and accept the love He has for us, thus re-shaping our core beliefs.

Jesus' death on a cross is the perfect expression of love. As he mentions, "No one has greater love than this." We can't expect perfect love from ourselves, but we can participate in a growing love that moves closer to accepting the love that God and others have for us, one day at a time. Our fruit blossoms as we share with others the love that we have been freely given.

Slowly, we begin to see our attitude changing as we find freedom from lust addiction, sexual compulsions, and other unhealthy attachments. Through recovery and a commitment to the sacraments, old patterns of thinking and behaving are replaced with a new fundamental outlook centered around the core beliefs of:

- I am loveable
- If people really knew me, they could love me more
- I can count on others and God to meet my needs
- God and healthy relationships are my greatest need and source of comfort

Reflection Questions

- How have you experienced love and acceptance throughout your recovery journey?
- How have you learned to accept the love that God freely gives you?
- How do you relate to the change of core beliefs noted by Dr. Kleponis in this reflection?

Attend a CIR Retreat in 2024

There are several retreat opportunities around the country this year to strengthen your recovery and faith

- Hear inspiring testimonies, attend meetings, engage the sacraments, participate in workshops, and more!
- Dedicated time for quiet meditation and fellowship
- Remaining 2024 retreats include Portland, OR (full); Hanceville, AL; Wichita, KS; Fort Wayne, IN; San Diego, CA; Subiaco, AR
- For more information and to register for a retreat visit **catholicinrecovery.com/events**

Sunday Mass Readings this Week

First Reading: Acts 10:25-26, 34-35, 44-48

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 98:1, 2-3, 3-4

Second Reading: 1 John 4:7-10

Gospel: John 15:9-17