

Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time



Some concepts that are key to our Catholic faith can be difficult to understand and challenging to actively apply. The basic idea that Jesus Christ died for the salvation of the world is central to our Christian worldview. Yet, how should that inform and influence the way we live? Saint Paul answers this question in his Second Letter to the Corinthians, this Sunday's Second Reading:

*Brothers and sisters:
The love of Christ impels us,
once we have come to the conviction that one died
for all;
therefore, all have died.
He indeed died for all,
so that those who live
might no longer live for themselves
but for him who for their sake died and was raised.*

*Consequently, from now on we regard no one
according to the flesh;
even if we once knew Christ according to the flesh,
yet now we know him so no longer.
So whoever is in Christ is a new creation:
the old things have passed away;
behold, new things have come.*

In the sacramental life of the Church, when we are baptized, we open ourselves up to God's loving and healing touch, adopted as His sons and daughters. This is like when we open ourselves up to God from the depths of our addictions, compulsions, and unhealthy attachments. While painful, this allows us to die to our sinful, compulsive ways and become open to the renewal of the Holy Spirit. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* details, "Immersion in water symbolizes not only death and purification, but also regeneration and renewal" (CCC 1262).

This spiritual truth is further noted by Saint Paul, who tells us that, "We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life. For if we have grown into union with him through a death like his, we shall also be united with him in the resurrection" (Romans 6:4-5).

Like baptism, when we admit our powerlessness over lust, sexual compulsions, and other unhealthy attachments, we undergo the (sometimes painful) process of being submerged into the healing waters of God's love. We die to self as to live anew in Christ.

In his book *Change or Die*, Alan Deutschman details the three phases required to undergo lasting change in our lives: (1) relate, (2) repeat, (3) and reframe. These steps are exactly what recovery and the Twelve Steps entail. We relate by forming a new, emotional relationship with a person (sponsor) or community (recovery group) that inspires and sustains hope. The new relationship helps us learn, practice, and master the new habits and skills that we'll need, particularly through the Twelve Steps. And we reframe by gaining new ways of thinking about our situations and lives, enabling us to take responsibility and make meaningful and lasting change with God's grace.

Whether we understand our transformation through the spiritual lens expressed by Saint Paul or the human process of relating, repeating, and reframing, let us embrace this new creation. Old things have passed away and new things have come. We ought to view others the same way and connect through the common experience of desperately needing God every day.

Reflection Questions

- How does your understanding of Christ's death and your identity as God's beloved child change your behavior and influence your life?
- How have you found regeneration and renewal through the waters of baptism?
- Describe your experience of relating, repeating, and reframing alongside others in recovery.

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Sunday Mass Readings this Week

First Reading: Job 38:1, 8-11

Responsorial Psalm: 107:23-24, 25-26, 28-29, 30

Second Reading: 2 Corinthians 5:14-17

Gospel: Mark 4:35-41