

Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time



We have been clothed in new life with Christ through 12-step recovery and the sacramentals of the Church. We know the emptiness that comes from a life run on our own accord, control, and self-seeking ambitions. The spiritual malady that takes root in families impacted by addiction tends to center itself in the mind.

Before we sought our own help for this spiritual malady, we may have professed faith in Jesus but operated under faulty beliefs. The perishable goods or quick solutions that we sought never satisfied and we became more self-exerting in pursuit of a contentment that we could never find. By the grace of God, we have been plucked from this endless cycle and shown a new way. In recovery, we live with purpose and faith in Jesus doing for us and our loved ones what we could not do for ourselves.

This Sunday's liturgical readings continue to point toward Jesus Christ as the Bread of Life. All who hunger and thirst will find fulfillment in him. In addition, we hear Saint Paul speak to the new life made possible by Christ in this Sunday's Second Reading:

Brothers and sisters:

*I declare and testify in the Lord
that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do,
in the futility of their minds;
that is not how you learned Christ,
assuming that you have heard of him and were taught
in him,
as truth is in Jesus,
that you should put away the old self of your former
way of life,
corrupted through deceitful desires,
and be renewed in the spirit of your minds,
and put on the new self,
created in God's way in righteousness and holiness of
truth.*

Our path through family addiction is proof that balancing our family's long-term needs with the short-term desires of each individual is difficult. We can't do it alone. Add the cunning, baffling, and powerful features of addiction, and the consequences are both painful and spiritually destructive. Jesus knows this about human nature and is confronted with our reality after feeding a crowd of 5,000 people. Like us, crowds of followers went to great lengths to find Jesus.

Jesus proclaims:

*You are looking for me not because you saw signs
but because you ate the loaves and were filled.
Do not work for food that perishes
but for the food that endures for eternal life,
which the Son of Man will give you.
For on him the Father, God, has set his seal.*

Therefore, we turn to Christ as our guide, our Higher Power, and our Savior. Through the process of working the steps, particularly Step Two, we shift our beliefs and futile thoughts toward Jesus. We can find an intimate encounter with our Lord in the Eucharist, as further explored in John 6 and emphasized by Saint Ignatius of Antioch:

“Every time [the Eucharist] is celebrated, the work of our redemption is carried on and we break the one bread that provides the medicine of immortality, the antidote for death, and the food that makes us live forever in Jesus Christ.”

The healing power of Jesus Christ and his true presence found in the Eucharist serves as a beacon of hope amidst our struggles. Together with the fellowship of others in recovery and the boundless grace received through the sacraments, we find lasting peace, deeper faith, and a strengthened resolve to overcome the chains of family addiction.

Reflection Questions

- What are the futile thoughts, perishable goods, or instant gratifications that challenge you from truly surrendering to Jesus?
- How have you learned to delay gratification and find lasting peace through 12-step recovery and the sacramental life of the Church?
- How does the Eucharist nourish your soul and strengthen your resolve to live this day successfully?

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Sunday Mass Readings this Week

First Reading: Exodus 16:2-4, 12-15

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 78:3-4, 23-24, 25, 54

Second Reading: Ephesians 4:17, 20-24

Gospel: John 6:24-35