

Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time



“Vanity of vanities!... All things are vanity!” (Ecclesiastes 1:2). These ancient words reflect the frustration many of us feel as adult children of dysfunctional families. We may have spent years trying to earn love, control chaos, or fix those around us. We worked hard to be good, responsible, or invisible—hoping someone might finally notice our worth. But these efforts, often rooted in survival, left us feeling unfulfilled, disconnected, and unsure of who we really were. Our lives were oriented around external validation or unhealthy patterns, all of which proved to be, in the end, vanity.

Recovery offers us something deeper. Through the Twelve Steps and the healing grace of God, we discover that peace and freedom are not found in striving, but in surrender. As our hearts begin to heal, we no longer chase love or stability in places that can’t give it. Instead, we learn to rest in our identity as beloved sons and daughters of a good and faithful Father.

This Sunday’s second reading invites us into this reorientation. Saint Paul writes (Colossians 3:5, 9–10):

Put to death, then, the parts of you that are earthly: immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and the greed that is idolatry. Stop lying to one another, since you have taken off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed, for knowledge, in the image of its creator.

For adult children, the “old self” may include the roles we were forced into: the hero, the scapegoat, the lost child, the mascot. We acted out of fear, guilt, or a deep sense of shame. Even now, these patterns can show up in how we relate to others—over-responsibility, emotional avoidance, difficulty setting boundaries, or an inability to trust. Paul’s words speak directly to our hearts: these are not who we are. We are called to a new self, renewed in the image of God.

Idolatry, as Paul describes, includes anything we place above God—including the coping strategies we once relied on. In our families, we may have learned to idolize approval, control, or keeping the peace at all costs. In adulthood, these idols often persist. But when we seek God first, we begin to let go of these attachments and discover lasting peace.

In recovery spaces, we often hear, “don’t leave before the miracle happens.” For us, the miracle is often internal. It may look like making decisions without fear. Or setting boundaries without guilt. Or trusting someone enough to be vulnerable. These are small but powerful signs that healing is taking root.

We also hear, “don’t leave *after* the miracle happens.” Once we begin to feel safe or whole, it can be tempting to drift away from the very practices that helped us heal. But our spiritual growth needs continued nourishment. Prayer, honest sharing, reading Scripture, and spiritual fellowship all keep us close to the One who makes all things new.

The greatest freedom isn’t in changing our family history, but in no longer being defined by it. We are new creations. We no longer live for others’ approval or fear of rejection. We live in God’s grace, one day at a time.

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- What roles or patterns from your past have become “idols” in your life today?
- How have you experienced the miracle of healing in your recovery journey?
- What helps you remain connected to your “new self” when old fears or habits try to return?

Virtual Recovery Summit in September

*A Day of Hope and Healing:
A Catholic Response to Addiction*

- Save the date for **Friday, September 26, 2025**
- CIR is partnering with iTHIRST Initiative to host a full day full of testimonies, recovery meetings, live music, workshops, keynote speakers, prayer, and more
- Stay tuned for updates over the next several weeks with more information and how to register
- More information TBA and will be updated online at **catholicinrecovery.com/2025-summit**

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First Reading: Ecclesiastes 1:2; 2:21-23

Responsorial Psalm: Ps 90:3-4, 5-6, 12-13, 14 & 17

Second Reading: Colossians 3:1-5, 9-11

Gospel: Luke 12:13-21