

## **Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time**



“Vanity of vanities!... All things are vanity!” (Ecclesiastes 1:2). This cry from the Book of Ecclesiastes introduces this Sunday’s readings and echoes loudly for those of us recovering from lust addiction. At the core of our addiction was a relentless search for fulfillment in things that could never satisfy. We pursued pleasure, escape, and fantasy—often believing we had control. But lust proved to be a deceptive idol. The more we sought relief through it, the emptier we became.

Recovery offers a new way of living. The Twelve Steps, integrated with the spiritual wisdom of the Church, teach us to reorient our hearts toward what is eternal. As our priorities shift, we no longer seek meaning through gratification or control. Instead, we begin to desire truth, purity, and communion—with God, ourselves, and others. But this takes time. As we say in recovery circles, “don’t leave before the miracle happens.” That miracle is not just sobriety—it’s transformation.

In this Sunday’s second reading, Saint Paul exhorts the faithful to put aside the old self and seek the things of heaven (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.*

Paul’s words are painfully accurate for anyone who has struggled with compulsive lust. Our “old self” was driven by desire, fantasy, and secrecy. We often lived a double life, hiding our behavior while longing for intimacy we didn’t know how to experience. These patterns enslaved us. Recovery invited us to surrender them, not once but daily.

Paul speaks of “the greed that is idolatry”—a powerful image for lust addiction. Greed, in this context, is the belief that we must consume more to feel satisfied. But our hearts were made for love, not consumption. When we treat others—or ourselves—as objects, we disconnect from our true dignity and from God.

As we work the Steps, we encounter new freedom. But with this freedom comes the ongoing challenge to stay close to God. As Saint Thomas Aquinas warns, even after lust is removed, we may turn to other idols—power, pleasure, honor, or wealth—as substitutes for true surrender. The old self is always looking for new disguises.

We also hear in meetings, “don’t leave *after* the miracle happens.” Once we’ve experienced healing, there can be a temptation to coast—to let go of spiritual practices or community. But the grace that freed us is the grace that must continue to sustain us. If we don’t stay grounded in prayer, fellowship, and the sacraments, we can lose touch with the transformation that God began in us.

The greatest gift of recovery is not just freedom from lust, but freedom to love rightly. We no longer seek to take or escape, but to give and connect. In this way, our new self is continually “being renewed in the image of its creator.”

**FYZW]cb Ei Yg]cbg**

- What have you chased in the past that proved to be “vanity”?
- How do you recognize when the “old self” is trying to reassert itself in your thoughts or behavior?
- What spiritual practices help you stay grounded in your new identity as a beloved child of God?

### **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](http://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