

Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time



Remaining on the path of recovery from lust addiction is not always easy. Our old ways of coping—through fantasy, secrecy, or compulsive behaviors—came with real consequences, harming our relationships, integrity, and spiritual life. By God’s grace and through the Twelve Steps, we have been awakened to a new way of living. The world around us may not immediately change, but as we surrender our will and our life to God, we grow in our ability to live with honesty, self-control, and peace.

God is actively forming and strengthening us for this journey. He has provided spiritual tools—prayer, accountability partners, honest fellowship, the sacraments, and recovery literature—that equip us to navigate fear, temptation, and emotional turmoil without returning to the very habits that once enslaved us. Yet growth rarely comes without discomfort. Without lust to numb or distract us, we must face feelings like loneliness, shame, and anxiety head-on. In these moments, the experience, strength, and hope of others who have walked this road before us are invaluable, showing us that lasting change is possible.

This Sunday’s second reading speaks directly to the tension between the pain of change and the reward it brings (Hebrews 12:7–13):

*Endure your trials as “discipline”;
God treats you as sons.
For what “son” is there whom his father does not discipline?
At the time,
all discipline seems a cause not for joy but for pain,
yet later it brings the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who are trained by it.
So strengthen your drooping hands and your weak knees.
Make straight paths for your feet,
that what is lame may not be disjointed but healed.*

Instead of blindly following every impulse and craving, we pause and invite God to guide our decision-making. This often means building the courage to see how our lustful attitudes and behaviors affect others. Pain comes from recognizing the truth that our actions impact those we care the most about. Fortunately, the Twelve Steps provide an avenue of healing for ourselves and others. Each step is critical to building our spiritual toolkit, beginning with assessing and acknowledging the natural consequences of our actions.

Natural consequences tend to be mistaken as a punishment from God. It is wise to recognize the difference. God does not enable behavior that separates us from Him by simply letting us off the hook. Instead, He gives us the opportunity to learn from the experience so that we may know peace.

Lust once promised quick relief, but it delivered emptiness and bondage. God's discipline invites us into freedom, even though the process can feel painful. The work of recovery—honest inventories, making amends, setting boundaries, confessing to God and others—requires courage and humility. But over time, these practices bear “the peaceful fruit of righteousness,” replacing chaos with peace and isolation with connection.

“Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I tell you, will attempt to enter but will not be strong enough,” Jesus says to a crowd in this Sunday's Gospel reading.

For us, the narrow gate may be reaching out to a sponsor when we'd rather hide, saying “no” to a tempting situation, or choosing to be honest when a lie feels easier. These decisions, made consistently, strengthen us to persevere and protect our recovery.

God's discipline is not condemnation—it is loving training. If we allow Him to shape us, He will turn even our most painful experiences into sources of strength, hope, and purpose for ourselves and others.

Reflection Questions

- What are some “narrow gate” choices you've faced in your recovery recently?
- How have you experienced God's discipline leading to greater freedom from lust?
- Where do you still struggle to see discipline as an expression of God's love?

The Value of Service in Recovery

A webinar exploring the service imperative in which we are called to participate in our recovery and faith

- Webinar on **Wednesday, August 27 at 7p ET/4p PT**
- Gain a deeper understanding of why service is vital to sustain recovery, insight into the Catholic call to serve, tools for discerning and using your God-given gifts, practical ideas for service roles, and how to start a meeting
- Free for CIR+ members otherwise \$10 to register
- This and all webinar recordings available on CIR+
- Register at **www.catholicinrecovery.com/webinars**

Sunday Mass Readings this Week

First Reading: Isaiah 66:18-21

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 117:1, 2

Second Reading: Hebrews 12:5-7, 11-13

Gospel: Luke 13:22-30