

Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time



Saint John Henry Newman wrote, “Faith is the reasoning of a mind preoccupied with God.” For many of us in recovery from lust addiction, our minds were once preoccupied with something very different—fantasy, control, shame, and escape. Lust became our default lens, warping how we saw others and ourselves. But when we began the journey of recovery, something shifted. We began to let go of illusions and open ourselves to the possibility of something greater. The Twelve Steps—especially when integrated with the sacraments—gave us a way to reorder our lives around God, not lust.

This Sunday’s second reading from Hebrews offers a striking definition of faith: “Faith is the realization of what is hoped for and evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1).

Saint Paul then recounts the stories of our spiritual ancestors who trusted God’s promises, even without immediate reward. They remained faithful to something greater than themselves (Hebrews 11:13–16):

*They did not receive what had been promised
but saw it and greeted it from afar
and acknowledged themselves to be strangers and
aliens on earth,
for those who speak thus show that they are seeking
a homeland.
If they had been thinking of the land from which
they had come,
they would have had opportunity to return.
But now they desire a better homeland, a heavenly
one.
Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their
God,
for he has prepared a city for them.*

This resonates deeply with the recovery journey. We are also “strangers” to the world we once knew. We have left behind the shadows of lust, secrecy, and self-destruction to seek a new homeland—a life ordered around truth, dignity, and communion. Like the saints before us, we have glimpsed a better way. Even when temptations return, we have no desire to go back.

But recovery is not passive. Faith is not just a feeling—it is lived out through daily action. We take inventory. We confess. We make amends. We build new habits. These are not just spiritual disciplines—they are acts of trust. We believe that if we do the next right thing, God will take care of the rest. As we live this way, the obsession begins to lift. We learn to see others not as objects to be used, but as people to be loved.

Still, this road isn't always clear. At times, we don't know what God's will is. But we become more familiar with what it is *not*—it is not manipulation, fantasy, or escape. It is connection, honesty, and surrender. We begin to hear the still, small voice of the Spirit guiding us away from shame and into freedom.

The Merton Prayer, written by Trappist monk Thomas Merton, expresses this tension beautifully. It is a prayer of trust for those who know what it means to walk through confusion and still choose to believe:

“My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end, nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road, though I may know nothing about it. Therefore will I trust you always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.”

This prayer can become an anchor for those of us who once placed all our hope in temporary satisfaction. As we grow, our minds become preoccupied not with lust, but with God—and our hearts are filled with the freedom that comes from living in the light.

Reflection Questions

- How have your thoughts and desires changed as you've grown in recovery?
- What does it mean for you to seek a “better homeland” instead of returning to old habits?
- How can the Merton prayer help you when you feel uncertain or spiritually lost?

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Sunday Mass Readings this Week

First Reading: Wisdom 18:6-9

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 33:1, 12, 18-19, 20-22

Second Reading: Hebrews 11:1-2, 8-19

Gospel: Luke 12:32-48