

Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time



Suffering often arises in recovery from lust when our expectations of ourselves or others go unmet. We wanted relationships to look a certain way, or we believed lust would meet our needs for intimacy and love. When reality didn't align, we numbed ourselves through acting out—creating the illusion of control over people, fantasy, and outcomes.

In recovery, we are invited to live on God's terms. This requires building new tools to handle discomfort, loneliness, shame, restlessness, and fear. Instead of grasping for false intimacy, we are learning to turn to God and trusted others for guidance. We relinquish the role of director and let God lead.

Letting go may sound simple, but in practice it challenges our deepest instincts. Lust demanded immediate gratification; surrender requires patience and trust. Given how little we understand of God's plans, honesty, humility, open-mindedness and willingness are necessary to walk a new path.

This Sunday's first reading expresses this surrender (Wisdom 9:13–18b):

*Who can know God's counsel,
or who can conceive what the LORD intends?
For the deliberations of mortals are timid,
and unsure are our plans.
For the corruptible body burdens the soul
and the earthen shelter weighs down the mind that
has many concerns.
And scarce do we guess the things on earth,
and what is within our grasp we find with difficulty;
but when things are in heaven, who can search them
out?
Or who ever knew your counsel, except you had
given wisdom
and sent your holy spirit from on high?
And thus were the paths of those on earth made
straight.*

God's will is less about figuring out every detail and more about living with honesty and openness right now. Surrender happens when we admit our powerlessness, acknowledge the destruction caused by lust, and begin to trust God to order our lives.

Summarizing Emmet Fox, God does not need to be the only thing in our lives, but He must be the first thing. As our relationship with Him grows, we notice that we're less attached to our own expectations and begin to trust that He will give directions as needed.

“Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple,” Jesus declares in this Sunday’s Gospel reading as He stresses the importance of establishing a strong spiritual foundation (Luke 14:27). “In the same way, anyone of you who does not renounce all his possessions cannot be my disciple,” He adds (Luke 14:33). Instead of just surrendering on our own terms, a full surrender is necessary for recovery.

Our cross may include temptation, loneliness, or unfulfilled desires. We cannot cling to lust as a backup plan or reserve option. Surrender must be total. Only then do we begin to live freely.

Letting go becomes a daily rhythm. Each time we turn away from temptation, pause to pray, reach out for accountability, or sit with difficult emotions rather than fleeing them, we grow stronger. We learn to focus less on outcomes and more on showing up, doing the next right thing, and trusting God with the results. Over time, He grants us freedom and integrity, one day at a time.

Reflection Questions

- What expectations about love, relationships, or lust have you had to surrender in recovery?
- How do the words from Wisdom remind you of your limitations and God’s greater plan?
- What does “carrying your cross” look like in your pursuit of sexual freedom today?

A Day of Hope and Healing

*A virtual recovery summit co-hosted by
Catholic in Recovery and iTHIRST Initiative*

- Special one-day event on **Friday, September 26**
- Join fellow CIR community members from around the world for a day of faith, fellowship, and renewal
- Keynote speakers include Dr. Matthew Breuninger, Dawn Eden Goldstein, and Fr. Sean Kilcawley
- Catholic in Recovery meetings and interactive workshops
- Praise & worship music, prayer, and testimonies of hope
- Register at **catholicinrecovery.com/2025-summit**

Sunday Mass Readings this Week

First Reading: Wisdom 9:13-18b

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

Second Reading: Philemon 9-10, 12-17

Gospel: Luke 14:25-33