

4th Sunday of Lent



God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so everyone who believes in him might have eternal life.

A central theme of this Sunday's liturgy is the gift that has been freely given to us by God through his Son, Jesus Christ. His life, death, and resurrection have earned our freedom and salvation—something we cannot merit ourselves. We get the chance to encounter freedom from the chains of lust addiction, sexual compulsions, and the effects of unhealthy attachments when we open our eyes to this divine truth.

The Twelve Steps of recovery and the sacraments of the Catholic Church provide a framework to receive God's grace. When they operate hand-in-hand, we can experience a deeper appreciation for the gift of Christ present to us through the sacraments.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation was instituted by the resurrected Christ. "Receive the Holy Spirit," Jesus said to his apostles, "Whose sins you forgive are forgiven, and whose sins you retain are retained." By preparing to meet our Lord in confession, we participate in an act of conversion and practice turning our will and life over to the care of God.

We do not turn to God in this way in order to be condemned. Instead, our confession is an acknowledgment of His grace that saves us. The Catechism of the Catholic Church reads, "In a profound sense it is also a 'confession'—acknowledgment and praise—of the holiness of God and of his mercy toward sinful man."

Honoring the process of the Sacrament of Reconciliation means engaging many of the Twelve Steps. A searching and fearless moral inventory (Step 4) leads us to admitting to God, ourselves, and another the exact nature of our wrongs (Step 5). A contrite and repentant heart (Step 6) moves us to prayerfully ask God to remove the character defects that stand in the way of serving Him and others (Step 7). Given proper spiritual direction, we consider those we've harmed (Step 8) and make amends to them, except when to do so would injure them or others (Step 9).

Conducting ourselves in this manner and making a daily commitment to remain in God's grace brings a life of joy and peace. Let us give thanks to God for the magnificent gift of life and faith as we hear from a portion of this Sunday's Gospel Reading:

Jesus said to Nicodemus:

"Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life."

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son,

so that everyone who believes in him might not perish

but might have eternal life.

For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world,

but that the world might be saved through him."

- How do the sacraments of the Catholic Church influence your participation in Twelve Step recovery?
- How do the Twelve Steps inform your understanding of the sacraments of the Catholic Church?
- What gifts are you grateful for today?

Catholic in Recovery Resources Online

Visit catholicinrecovery.com for a variety of resources related to recovery and the Catholic Church

- Blog articles published each week related to various types of addiction, topics related to recovery, and practical experiences with the twelve steps and sacraments
- Full meeting directory with a variety of virtual and in-person meetings available
- Testimonials from CIR participants and opportunities to engage community

Sunday Mass Readings this Week

1st Reading: 2 Chronicles 36:14-16, 19-23

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 137:1-2, 3, 4-5, 6

2nd Reading: Ephesians 2:4-10

Gospel: John 3:14-21