

Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time



As we have over the past two weeks, we continue to hear from Saint Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians which emphasizes themes of our unique spiritual gifts and value to the body of Christ. Saint Paul declares to the people of Corinth, whose culture was rooted in prosperity and pleasure:

*Brothers and sisters:
Strive eagerly for the greatest spiritual gifts.
But I shall show you a still more excellent way.*

*If I speak in human and angelic tongues,
but do not have love,
I am a resounding gong or a clashing cymbal.
And if I have the gift of prophecy,
and comprehend all mysteries and all knowledge;
if I have all faith so as to move mountains,
but do not have love, I am nothing.
If I give away everything I own,
and if I hand my body over so that I may boast,
but do not have love, I gain nothing.*

What is love? We will hear some characteristics in a moment, but in order for love to inform our behavior and attitude, we must uncover what it is and what it is not. As per Bishop Robert Barron, "To love is to break free of the black hole of our own self-regard and truly to want what is good for the other."

It does not mean to do good for another for our own sake or to cater to another's requests because they will, in turn, like us more. Love is willing to put aside our ego for the good of the other. Saint Paul continues:

*Love is patient, love is kind.
It is not jealous, it is not pompous,
It is not inflated, it is not rude,
it does not seek its own interests,
it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over
injury,
it does not rejoice over wrongdoing
but rejoices with the truth.
It bears all things, believes all things,
hopes all things, endures all things.*

This is the kind of love expressed in the rooms of recovery. We unite on equal ground as beloved children of God who *need* His grace each day. We are blessed with a fellowship rooted in humility, openness, and honesty. We bear the suffering of the newcomer whose shoes we have stood in. When a member takes a step back or acts out in their addiction, we welcome them back with love knowing that they have a chance to experience a new freedom and happiness.

The Twelve Steps of addiction recovery and the sacraments of the Catholic Church dovetail together to fill our spirits with love. First, we often have to rid ourselves of self-centered pride and egotism which can prevent us from knowing the love of God. Admitting powerlessness over addictions, compulsions, and unhealthy attachments opens us up to receive divine love from others.

Isolation, withdrawal, and secret-keeping ensure that we will remain in the black hole of our own self-regard and blocked from the fullness of God's love. Instead, we surrender all to Him including the results of our recovery and the plan to carry it out. A fearless and moral inventory (Step Four) helps uncover the truth and seeks to overcome dishonesty with ourselves, God, and others as we share it with a trusted sponsor and in the Sacrament of Confession.

The mystery of God's plan for us will continue to be revealed. We can learn much from the experience of others and by relying on God to direct our will. Jesus was sent to bring glad tidings to the poor and to proclaim liberty to captives. Today, we have a chance to receive His grace and to choose faith, hope, and love.

Reflection Questions

- How have you found freedom from self-centered ambitions while seeking recovery and a spiritual way of life?
 - What does the black hole of your own self-regard look like?

- How have you experienced divine love through participating in a recovery fellowship?
 - Describe a moment that was particularly helpful to you.

Catholic in Recovery Resources Online

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

- Articles published weekly related to various types of addictions, the impact of addiction on families, practical application of the Twelve Steps and sacraments, and more
- Full directory of virtual and in-person meetings available
- Testimonials from CIR participants and opportunities to engage community
- Catholic in Recovery Novena

Sunday Mass Readings this Week

First Reading: Jeremiah 1:4-5, 17-19

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 71:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 15-17

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:31-13:13

Gospel: Luke 4:21-30