

Twenty-Second Sunday of Ordinary Time
August 31, 2025
Year of the Holy Spirit

“It is not difficult for an observer who operates solely on the level of psychology and experience to discover that degradation in the area of pleasure and love is in proportion to the void left in man from the false and deceptive joys sought in those things which St. Paul called the ‘works of the flesh’: ‘immorality, impurity, licentiousness . . . drinking bouts, orgies and the like’ (Gal. 5:19,21). One can add to these false joys—and there are many connected with them—those sought in the possession and immoderate use of wealth, in luxury, in ambition for power, in short, in that passion for an almost frantic search for earthly goods which can easily produce a darkened mind, as St. Paul mentions (cf. Eph. 4:18-19), and Jesus laments (cf. Mk. 4:19).”

(Pope Saint John Paul II, General Audience of June 19, 1991)

In his commentary upon the Gospel of Saint Luke, Saint Cyril of Alexandria likens the person who must move from a place of honor, one not reserved for him, to a seat of lesser importance, as a thief. He wrote: *“It is like a theft, so to speak, and the restitution of stolen goods. He must restore what he has seized because he had no right to take it”*. Adding to this example of Saint Cyril’s, I pose this question for our reflection: Why did the person choose to go to the higher position knowing it was not theirs to claim? I offer you this answer – love.

Love being the answer proposed may seem odd to many. One does not naturally steal out of love. I remind all, Greeks philosophers have shown love may be defined in various ways. One may say: “I love my pet” and “I love my child,” but the way we define love is understood to be different. Another way to understand love involves having a disordered attachment to a person, place or thing. It is the disordered love of acknowledgment or honor which motivates the person to assume another’s place of honor, one which they had not yet earned. Thus, leading to their shameful retreat to a lower place both physically and in the eyes of the other guests.

On the day of our Baptism (within the Catholic faith), the priest, while presenting the white garment, addressed us with these words: “N., (name of baptized) you have become a new creation, and have clothed yourself in Christ.” Saint Paul would write that we, as new creations through the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus, should seek to live in accord with the will of God. In doing thus, we would not commit acts which would *“grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were sealed for the day of redemption”*. (Ephesians 4:30)

The Holy Spirit comes to dwell within our souls on the day of our Baptism. When we live in such a way as to grieve the Holy Spirit, we are denying ourselves true joy. True joy is only present to the Christian who abides under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We know this to be true for we live in a world which promises joy but offers sadness. Sadness is the fruit of a disordered understanding of love through pleasure. A person seeks out people or things which offer temporary pleasure, but not true lasting joy. A modern example: IF those images one can view on a computer provided true joy, then why do so many return seeking out more? Would not one suffice? No, we know no matter how many images one views or how many outfits one purchases or how many anything one gains; our only real joy, our only true joy is found when we live a life in union with the Holy Spirit. All else pales in comparison. Maybe this thought was expressed long ago in a more profound way when Saint Augustine wrote in his Confessions: “Our hearts are restless, till they rest in Thee.”