

Reflection Questions

- How do you understand the unmanageable nature of addiction?
 - What personal experience do you have trying to manage life without God?
- What consequences have you experienced as a result of your addictions/compulsions/unhealthy attachments?
 - Consider the emotional, physical, spiritual, relational, and career/educational consequences of your behavior.
 - Note: this can provide a framework to begin working on Step 1 with a sponsor.

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Sunday Mass Readings This Week

1st Reading: Isaiah 8:23-9:3

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 27:1, 4, 13-14

2nd Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:10-13, 17

Gospel: Matthew 4:12-23

3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time



Our focus this week will continue to be on the first step: admitting we are powerless over the source of our addiction—that our lives had become unmanageable. We have come to a point in our journey where we are called to make a change from the addictive behavior and pursuit of unhealthy attachments that once dictated our lives. Pornography, sex, lust, the need for control, and other sources of addiction have penetrated our lives in a way that can no longer be managed on our own.

The twelve steps of recovery are prefaced in the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous after noting the cunning, baffling, and powerful nature of addiction:

“Without help it is too much for us. But there is One who has all power—that One is God. May you find Him now! Half measures availed us nothing. We stood at the turning point. We asked His protection and care with complete abandon.”

We express our abandonment—or retreat from old actions, behavior, and way of thinking—by honestly uncovering the truth of our condition. Putting specific consequences of our self-centered behavior on paper makes it possible to see our lives from a new set of lenses. We trust that, with the help of God, this will not be an impossible exercise and is a critical part of making spiritual progress.

Acknowledging that we have been ruled by addiction to pornography and sex will not give us freedom. Beginning work on the first step of recovery will, however, lay a foundation for the spiritual growth that is yet to come. As Catholics, we call this repentance.

Last week we discussed the importance of accompaniment in this process. We can't do it alone, and sharing our work with a sponsor can be just as important as putting pen to paper. We abandon ourselves to God by putting faith in the experience, strength, and hope of others who attend meetings and value their recovery. We share openly and honestly in meetings and with our sponsors so that the truth may set us free!

The time is now. Christ echoes the sentiment of taking action to move away from our old behavior and way of life in this week's Gospel Reading:

*The people who sit in darkness have seen a great light,
on those dwelling in a land overshadowed by death
light has arisen.
From that time on, Jesus began to preach and say,
"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."*

The disciples of Jesus were no different than we are: simple individuals focused on their own agendas and obligations. They likely had their own set of concerns, fears, and hang-ups. Things changed when they encountered Christ, as He said to them:

*"Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men."
At once they left their nets and followed him.*

The kingdom of God is at hand. Thanks to the 12 steps of addiction recovery, we know exactly what to do when God requests that we repent and believe in the good news. We seek an individual who has been in our position, ask them to take us through the steps, stay close to the sacraments, and begin the process of writing and sharing. Suddenly we'll find that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.