

Reflection Questions

- Share how your recovery has been aided by the support of others walking a similar path.
- What have been the emotional and spiritual costs of trying to find recovery on your own?
- What kind of experience, strength, and hope would you share with someone seeking to find a sponsor?

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Sunday Mass Readings this Week

1st Reading: 1 Samuel 3:3b-10, 19

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 40:2, 4, 7-8, 8-9, 10

2nd Reading: 1 Corinthians 6:13c-15a, 17-20

Gospel: John 1:35-42

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As we begin a new year, we are given a natural opportunity to focus on the foundation of our recovery and spiritual way of life. This also gives us the chance to get rooted in the Twelve Steps, where we experience an enriched relationship with Christ and deeper appreciation for the sacraments of the Catholic Church. We begin with Step One: *We admitted we were powerless over addiction and unhealthy attachments—that our lives had become unmanageable.*

Willingness, humility, and honesty are expressed when taking action on a First Step. Having a general understanding about the misery of our current state or failure to make improvement on our own is not enough. The action taken requires writing, exposing the real darkness of our addictive and unhealthy behavior, and starting to get honest with ourselves.

We don't have to—and should not—go through this alone. Spiritual accompaniment is the lifeblood of recovery and benefits all involved. Our first goal might be to seek a sponsor who has been through the Twelve Steps and values their recovery enough to know the importance of sharing the Good News with others.

One's sponsor ought not be perfect, but can be a guidepost to Christ by encouraging spiritual growth. John the Baptist literally brought people to Jesus, which we will hear of in this Sunday's Gospel Reading. It's possible, however, that our experience is more like that of Samuel's. Samuel was greeted by the Lord in his sleep, much like we're nudged by God while active in our addictions. This week's First Reading describes this important revelation:

At that time Samuel was not familiar with the Lord, because the Lord had not revealed anything to him as yet.

The Lord called Samuel again, for the third time.

Getting up and going to Eli, he said,

“Here I am. You called me.”

Then Eli understood that the Lord was calling the youth.

So he said to Samuel, “Go to sleep, and if you are called, reply,

Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.”

When Samuel went to sleep in his place,

the Lord came and revealed his presence,

calling out as before, “Samuel, Samuel!”

Samuel answered, “Speak, for your servant is listening.”

This line of mentorship and discipleship has been passed down throughout the ages. We've seen it happen as the early Christian Church was formed, and we know it's been taking place in twelve-step recovery groups for nearly a century. We are not asked to journey on our own and can benefit from the aid of a close companion. Saint Francis de Sales paints a poetic picture of what this relationship may look like:

“Have the greatest confidence in him, mingled with a holy reverence, yet so that the reverence diminish not your confidence, nor your confidence hinder in any way your reverence; confide in him with the respect of a daughter for her father and respect him with the confidence of a son in his mother: in a word, this friendship must be strong and sweet, altogether holy, sacred, divine, and spiritual.”

Let us recognize the important role that others play in our recovery and quest for spiritual progress. As we learn to hear the voice of God, many will help us understand and interpret His will through honest sharing in meetings and as we can encounter each other one-on-one. As the founders of modern recovery conclude, "We shall be with you in the Fellowship of the Spirit, and you will surely meet some of us as you trudge the Road of Happy Destiny.

May God bless you and keep you—until then" (*Alcoholics Anonymous*, p. 164).