

Reflection Questions

- What has helped you concede to your innermost self that you are powerless over your addiction, compulsion, or unhealthy attachment?
- What benefits have you experienced as a result of working with a sponsor in recovery?
- Share about how you met your sponsor and began working together through the Twelve Steps.

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Sunday Mass Readings This Week

First Reading: Isaiah 49:3, 5-6

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

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:1-3

Gospel: John 1:29-34

Second Sunday in Ordinary Time



As we begin a new year, it is prudent to recall the start of our recovery journey. We can use this time to get rooted in the Twelve Steps, prompting an enriched relationship with Christ and devotion to the sacraments. We begin with Step One: We admitted we were powerless over addictions, compulsions, and unhealthy attachments—that our lives had become unmanageable.

The Big Book of *Alcoholics Anonymous*, which includes wisdom translatable to all addictions, makes it clear how we are to build a foundation: "The idea that somehow, someday he will control and enjoy his drinking is the great obsession of every abnormal drinker. The persistence of this illusion is astonishing. Many pursue it into the gates of insanity or death.

We learned that we had to fully concede to our innermost selves that we were alcoholics. This is the first step in recovery. The delusion that we are like other people, or presently may be, has to be smashed" (p. 30).

We 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, like John the Baptist was to many, can be a guidepost to Jesus by encouraging spiritual growth. In this Sunday's Gospel Reading, we hear a pivotal moment in the history of discipleship:

*John the Baptist saw Jesus coming toward him and said,
"Behold, the Lamb of God,
who takes away the sin of the world.
He is the one of whom I said,
'A man is coming after me who ranks ahead of me
because he existed before me.'
I did not know him,
but the reason why I came baptizing with water was
that he might be made known to Israel."
John testified further, saying,
"I saw the Spirit come down like a dove from heaven
and remain upon him.
I did not know him,
but the one who sent me to baptize with water told
me,
'On whomever you see the Spirit come down and
remain,
he is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.'
Now I have seen and testified that he is the Son of
God."*

This line of mentorship and discipleship has been passed down throughout the ages. We are not asked to journey on our own, and can benefit from the aid of a close companion. In his book *Introduction to the Devout Life*, 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" (p. 12).

The spiritual path we are on asks us to be resilient and to pick up our cross each day. When we travel this road with others, we find encouragement and perspective that we otherwise would not find ourselves. There is great value in connecting with those both ahead of us and behind us on the journey, recognizing that we are not far apart and much more similar than we might believe.