

SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

As we enter the second week of Ordinary Time and continue settling into a new year, many of us are reminded of the early days of our recovery journey. For some, that beginning may feel fresh and raw; for others, it's a meaningful reminder of what brought us to the Twelve Steps and the grace that met us there. Step One calls us to admit our powerlessness and the unmanageability of our lives—an act that opens the door to lasting transformation.

This deep internal admission is not a one-time event, but a truth we return to often, especially as we encounter new seasons of life. It is the beginning of surrender and the start of our reliance on something far greater than ourselves. As we renew our spiritual foundation this year, we are invited to deepen our trust in Christ and stay grounded in the principles of recovery and the sacramental life of the Church.

In this Sunday's gospel reading (John 1:29-34), we encounter a powerful testimony—one that points directly to the heart of our faith:

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."

John the Baptist's mission was clear: he was not the Messiah, but one who prepared the way. He points others toward Jesus. Many of us have met people like this in

recovery—sponsors, mentors, friends—who didn't claim to have all the answers, but who knew the direction to point us in. Their example and guidance helped illuminate our path forward.

Spiritual accompaniment is the lifeblood of recovery. The Big Book of *Alcoholics Anonymous* offers this vital instruction: "We learned that we had to fully concede to our innermost selves that we were alcoholics. This is the first step in recovery" (p. 30). For many of us, the persistence of illusion—that we could manage our addiction on our own—nearly destroyed us. But in recovery, we found a new way forward, not alone, but with others who had walked the path and were willing to walk with us.

That experience is echoed in the Church's long tradition of spiritual friendship. In *Introduction to the Devout Life*, Saint Francis de Sales describes such a relationship as one that "must be strong and sweet, altogether holy, sacred, divine, and spiritual." He encourages us to "have the greatest confidence in [a spiritual companion], 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" (Part I, Chapter 4).

As we journey through this new year, let us remember that recovery is not a solo expedition. We are part of a community that points us toward healing. Like John the Baptist, our role becomes one of witness—both receiving and sharing the grace we have come to know.

God's Spirit rests upon us, not because of what we have earned, but because of who we belong to. We are sons and daughters of God, called into communion with Him and with each other. And through the Church, the sacraments, and the Steps, we are being baptized in the Holy Spirit. We are being renewed, restored, and sent out to share our hope with others.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- How have you experienced the grace of Step One in your life?
- Who has helped guide your journey toward spiritual awakening?
- In what ways are you being called to serve as a witness to others this year?

MASS READINGS

FIRST READING Isaiah 60:1-6

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 72:1-2, 7-8, 10-11, 12-13

SECOND READING Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6

GOSPEL Matthew 2:1-12