

THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

The beginning of a new year can stir a mix of hope and uncertainty for adult children of dysfunctional homes. For many of us, early life was shaped by chaos, confusion, and unmet emotional needs. As adults, we may still carry the residue of that instability—fear of abandonment, mistrust of others, perfectionism, or a drive to control everything. We may have used addictions, compulsions, or codependent behaviors to survive. But eventually, those coping tools turned against us, and we realized something had to change.

This is where the recovery journey begins—with the clarity that what once protected us now holds us back. We revisit Step One: We admitted we were powerless over the effects of alcoholism or other family dysfunction, that our lives had become unmanageable. That admission isn't weakness. It's an act of strength and humility. It's the first time we stop pretending and start healing.

The Big Book of *Alcoholics Anonymous* captures this moment with stark honesty: “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 in ACDH recovery, we may not identify with a substance-based addiction, but the emotional and spiritual disconnection is just as real. Powerlessness shows up in how we avoid conflict, how we over-function, how we replay old family roles—or how we continue seeking validation in the wrong places.

Eventually, we hit a wall. The self-protection stops working, and the pain becomes impossible to ignore. We realize we can't do this alone. As the Big Book says,

“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!” (*Alcoholics Anonymous*, p. 59). This becomes our lifeline. With God's help, we no longer have to carry the burdens of the past by ourselves.

Isaiah offers a beautiful promise in this Sunday's first reading: “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; upon those who lived in a land of gloom a light has shone” (Isaiah 9:1). Dysfunctional homes often cast a long shadow. But recovery allows us to move into the light of truth, grace, and connection. This light may appear gradually—through honest conversations, spiritual direction, therapy, or step work. But once it begins, it keeps growing.

This Sunday's gospel reading recalls how Jesus called the first disciples: “Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men.” We're told, “At once they left their nets and followed him” (Matthew 4:19–20). These were ordinary people with responsibilities and wounds of their own, yet they responded with trust. For those of us who have learned not to trust anyone, that kind of surrender can feel impossible. But it's also the invitation of recovery.

We're not asked to have it all figured out. We're simply asked to be honest about where we are and open to a new way of living. That might mean seeking out a recovery group, working with a sponsor, or bringing our wounds to God in prayer. It might mean learning to sit with difficult emotions instead of running from them. Each time we respond to the invitation to follow

Christ, we take one step further from dysfunction and one step closer to healing.

Recovery won't erase the past, but it does offer us a new future—one rooted in clarity, humility, and grace. When we begin with honesty and let go of what no longer serves us, we create space for God to lead us in love.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What patterns or survival strategies from childhood have become unmanageable in your adult life?
- How has the truth of your powerlessness opened the door to healing and hope?
- In what ways are you being called to respond to Christ's invitation to follow Him more closely?

MASS READINGS

FIRST READING Isaiah 8:23-9:3

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 27:1, 4, 13-14

SECOND READING 1 Corinthians 1:10-13, 17

GOSPEL Matthew 4:12-23