

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time



Our focus this week will continue to be on Step One: We admitted we were powerless over addictions, compulsions, and unhealthy attachments. We have come to a point in our journey where we are called to make a change from the patterns and behaviors that once dictated our lives and ruled our families. Alcohol, drugs, food, pornography, sex, gambling, technology, codependency, the need for control, or other sources of addiction have penetrated our lives in a way that can no longer be managed on our own. The ways we once coped with the tragedy of addiction no longer serve us or those we love.

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” (p. 59).

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 own 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.

Self-knowledge can only get us so far. Acknowledging that we have been ruled addiction is an important beginning, but we must take further action to find joy and freedom. Beginning work on the first step of recovery will lay a foundation for the spiritual growth that is yet to come.

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. Jesus echoes the sentiment of taking action to move away from old patterns and into a life of hope in this Sunday’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 Jesus, 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 Twelve Steps of 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.

Reflection Questions

- What personal experience do you have trying to manage life without God?
- What unhealthy patterns and behaviors have you engaged in order to cope with addiction?
- What freedom have you found as a result of leaving your "net" and following Jesus?

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Sunday Mass Readings this Week

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