

THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

A new year offers a new beginning—a chance to return to the foundations of recovery and revisit Step One: We admitted we were powerless over addictions, compulsions, and unhealthy attachments—that our lives had become unmanageable. For those recovering from lust addiction, this admission is often painful. Lust deceives us with the illusion of control, escape, or comfort. Yet over time, it consumes more of our energy, attention, and relationships, and we realize it's not just a behavior—it's a spiritual sickness.

Eventually, the moment comes when we can no longer deny the truth. We've tried to stop, to manage it on our own, to bargain with it—but nothing works. In that moment of clarity, the truth becomes undeniable: we are powerless. What felt like shameful defeat can become the beginning of true hope. The *Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous* speaks to this vital surrender: “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 us, it means admitting we cannot control lust—not through willpower, not by trying harder, not by making more promises to ourselves or others.

This admission of powerlessness opens the door to something greater. As the *Big Book* reminds us, “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 is not an abstract hope; it's a real invitation. In recovery, we begin to rely on God for the strength we could never generate ourselves. As we let go of pride and self-

reliance, we discover a power that brings true healing and lasting peace.

The prophet Isaiah gives language to this shift: “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). Lust isolates and blinds us. It thrives in secrecy, fantasy, and the darkness of shame. But Christ, who is the light of the world, meets us in that darkness and leads us out. Recovery is about learning to walk in that light—slowly, honestly, one step at a time.

That first step often includes telling the truth. We break the silence. We admit the pain our behavior has caused ourselves and others. And we do not walk this road alone. We find others who understand, who have walked this path, and who can guide us through the Twelve Steps. Their honesty, strength, and example help us believe that healing is possible.

In this Sunday's gospel, we see Jesus calling the first disciples while they were working by the sea. “Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men.” Immediately, they left their nets and followed Him (Matthew 4:19-20). Jesus calls us in a similar way. We don't need to be perfect or have it all figured out. We only need to respond.

Lust addiction recovery invites us to lay down our nets: the patterns of behavior, secrecy, and self-deception that once defined our lives. In their place, we build a new way of living: rooted in honesty, guided by spiritual direction, and strengthened by community. We begin to see the world and ourselves with new eyes.

Recovery doesn't promise instant transformation, but it does promise real change for those who are willing. We don't walk alone. Christ walks with us, calling us forward, step by step. And with each honest surrender, His light grows brighter.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What illusions of control or secrecy have prevented you from admitting your powerlessness over lust?
- How has God's light begun to shine in areas where lust once ruled your thoughts or behaviors?
- What old patterns might you be called to leave behind so you can follow Christ more freely?

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