FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Advent begins in the dark, and recovery from lust addiction often begins there too. Secrecy has narrowed our world, shame has made us afraid to be known, and repeated failure has weakened hope. Before the Church celebrates Christ's light, she gives voice to people who know they need God to come near.

As we approach the season of Advent, this Sunday's first reading gives voice to that longing. Isaiah cries out, *"Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down"* (Isaiah 63:19). He does not hide Israel's wandering, yet he remembers that God is still the potter and we are the work of His hands (Isaiah 64:7). Recovery asks for the same honesty. We acknowledge where lust has shaped our thoughts and behavior while trusting that God has not abandoned the work of forming us.

This movement reflects Step Two. After admitting our powerlessness, we come to believe that a Power greater than ourselves can restore us to sanity. In lust addiction recovery, sanity includes seeing temptation clearly instead of romanticizing it. It means recognizing that fantasy does not provide intimacy and secrecy does not protect us. Step Two gives us hope that our desires and imagination can be restored rather than merely suppressed.

Shame often pulls us backward into memories of failure, while fear carries us into tomorrow. We worry that temptation will always control us or that another fall is inevitable. Living one day at a time brings us back to the place where freedom is actually practiced. We do not need enough strength for every future temptation. We need grace for the choice in front of us now. Each faithful response strengthens the habit of turning toward God before old patterns begin directing us again. This repeated return is how hope becomes a lived experience.

Sunday's gospel gives this practice a deeper meaning. Jesus says, *"Be watchful! Be alert! You do not know when the time will come"* (Mark 13:33). This is not a call to live frightened of our sexuality or suspicious of every thought. It is an invitation to remain attentive before fantasy gains momentum and before isolation begins to feel reasonable.

Spiritual watchfulness is different from scrupulosity. Scrupulosity keeps our attention fixed on ourselves and can turn recovery into constant self-monitoring. Spiritual alertness keeps us connected to Christ. It helps us notice when our interior life is drifting and respond with honesty rather than panic.

That response may be as simple as naming what is happening to a sponsor or trusted person before it becomes a secret. It may mean returning to prayer when the mind begins seeking escape. These choices keep us in relationship and prevent temptation from becoming a private conversation that no one else can challenge.

Saint Paul reminds us that we are not waiting empty-handed. He tells the Corinthians, *"You are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ"* (1 Corinthians 1:7). God has already given us fellowship, the Steps, and sacramental grace. We are not asked to manufacture recovery alone.

Paul then gives us the foundation beneath hope: *"God is faithful"* (1 Corinthians 1:9). Our recovery does not depend on flawless vigilance or perfect purity. It rests in the faithfulness of God, who continues shaping us as we return to the light.

Advent reminds us that darkness is not evidence of God's absence. Christ is coming, and grace is already active. We stay awake by living honestly today, not by trying to control tomorrow. As we remain close to God and connected to others, hope becomes stronger than shame and the light within us becomes steadier.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Where is shame about the past or fear of future temptation making it difficult to live honestly today?
- How has Step Two, accountability, or the faith of another person helped restore hope when freedom felt impossible?
- What practice helps you notice an interior drift early and return to Christ before secrecy begins to grow?

ADVENT MASS READINGS

FIRST READING Isaiah 63:16b-17, 19b; 64:2-7
RESP. PS. Psalm 80:2-3, 15-16, 18-19
SECOND READING 1 Corinthians 1:3-9
GOSPEL Mark 13:33-37

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