

Reflection Questions

- What has helped you concede to your innermost self that you are powerless over addictions, compulsions, and unhealthy attachments?
- What benefits have you experienced from working with a sponsor in recovery?
- Describe how you met your sponsor and began establishing a foundation for your recovery.

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Sunday Mass Readings this Week

First Reading: 1 Samuel 3:3b-10, 19

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 40:2, 4, 7-8, 8-9, 10

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 6:13c-15a, 17-20

Gospel: John 1:35-42

Second Sunday in Ordinary Time



As we embark on a new year, we are given a natural opportunity to establish or re-establish a solid foundation for our recovery and spiritual way of life. We can use this time to get rooted in the Twelve Steps, prompting an enriched relationship with Jesus and renewed devotion to the sacraments. We begin with Step One: We admitted we were powerless over addictions, compulsions, and unhealthy attachments—that our lives had become unmanageable.

The Big Book of *Alcoholics Anonymous*, which includes wisdom relatable to all addictions, makes it clear how we are to build a foundation: "The idea that somehow, someday he will control and enjoy his drinking is the great obsession of every abnormal drinker. The persistence of this illusion is astonishing. Many pursue it into the gates of insanity or death.

We learned that we had to fully concede to our innermost selves that we were alcoholics. This is the first step in recovery. The delusion that we are like other people, or presently may be, has to be smashed" (p. 30).

We don't have to—and should not—go through this alone. Spiritual accompaniment is the lifeblood of recovery and benefits all. Our first goal might be to seek a sponsor who has been through the Twelve Steps and knows the importance of working with others.

One's sponsor doesn't need to be perfect but, like John the Baptist to Andrew and Peter or Eli to Samuel, serves to point us toward Jesus as our source of sobriety and salvation. Samuel was greeted by the Lord in his sleep and taught to recognize and understand the word of God by Eli, as per this Sunday's First Reading:

At that time Samuel was not familiar with the Lord, because the Lord had not revealed anything to him as yet.

The Lord called Samuel again, for the third time.

Getting up and going to Eli, he said,

"Here I am. You called me."

Then Eli understood that the Lord was calling the youth.

So he said to Samuel,

"Go to sleep, and if you are called, reply,

Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening."

When Samuel went to sleep in his place,

the Lord came and revealed his presence,

calling out as before, "Samuel, Samuel!"

Samuel answered, "Speak, for your servant is listening."

This line of mentorship and discipleship has been passed down throughout the ages. We've seen it happen as the early Christian Church was formed and we know it's been taking place in 12-step recovery groups for nearly a century. We are not asked to journey on our own and can benefit from the aid of a close companion. In his book *Introduction to the Devout Life*, Saint Francis de Sales paints a poetic picture of what this type of spiritual accompaniment can look like:

"Have the greatest confidence in him, 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: in a word, this friendship must be strong and sweet, altogether holy, sacred, divine, and spiritual" (p. 12).

The spiritual path of recovery invites us to be resilient and to pick up our cross each day. When we travel this road with others, we find encouragement and perspective that we otherwise would not find ourselves. There is great value in connecting with those ahead of us, next to us, and behind us on the journey, recognizing that we are not far apart and much more similar than we might believe.