

Reflection Questions

- How has your painful past been of value to others? How have others shown support to you and your family?
- Consider and describe an experience of needing to focus your recovery on your side of the street.
- What is happening in your life today that requires your surrender and trust in God?

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Sunday Mass Readings this Week

First Reading: Genesis 2:18-24

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 128:1-2, 3, 4-5, 6

Second Reading: Hebrews 2:9-11

Gospel: Mark 10:2-16

Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time



Addiction does not happen in a vacuum—it impacts much more than the individual engaging in dangerous compulsive behavior. Furthermore, patterns of alcoholism, disordered eating, lust, gambling, codependency, and other addictive tendencies often span across generations within families. Therefore, the whole family system is affected and involved in the process of addiction and recovery.

This idea does not need much explanation for most of us who know the pain of family addiction. Although each type of compulsive behavior can stir up unique levels of mistrust and reaction among family members, fractured relationships seem to be a common challenge among many in addiction recovery. Our reaction as family members often involves a desire for control due to the unmanageable nature of addiction.

This Sunday's first reading is taken from the second chapter of Genesis where we find Adam in hopes of a suitable partner. God creates Eve from the rib of Adam, making her "bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh," describing the intimate union between husband and wife. "That is why a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them become one flesh" (Genesis 2:23).

The fall of Adam and Eve, along with their eviction from the Garden of Eden, point toward the resounding effect our behavior has on our families. Shame, fear, and isolation immediately ensue. Adam blames his wife, Eve, who in turn sheds blame on the snake that tempted her. Years later, the first family to walk the earth still had plenty of problems with the peak of their dysfunction coming when their son Cain killed his brother Abel.

Frustration can come as we begin taking steps to change. Out of legitimate mistrust and shattered hope, we might be skeptical about the prospect of anyone else doing the challenging work of recovery with success. When those thoughts come, we must be reminded that the only person we can change is ourselves.

We may also comment that the problems of our family were caused by someone else, thus stepping back as they figure things out. We might otherwise be too eager to help, dictating our loved one's recovery while ignoring how addiction has impacted our behavior patterns. Either way, we focus on our side of the street in order to move toward wholeness.

Not everyone comes around to embrace spiritual convictions at the same time. As we experience the love of God changing us, we wish that others around us could find the same outlet. Sometimes, we find ourselves taking a risk and implementing the principles of recovery into our relationships. When appropriate, we may even lose the fear of discussing our circumstances with others.

With all things, there is a delicate balance to hold in recovery from the family spiritual disease of addiction. We must not allow our families or ourselves to only look inward, but instead share the fruit of our findings with others seeking help, even if we are still a work in progress.

In the chapter titled "The Family Afterward," the Big Book of *Alcoholics Anonymous* explains:

"This painful past may be of infinite value to other families still struggling with their problem. We think each family which has been relieved owes something to those who have not, and when the occasion requires, each member of it should be only too willing to bring their former mistakes, no matter how grievous, out of their hiding places. Showing others who suffer how we were given help is the very thing which makes life seem so worthwhile to us now" (p. 124).