

# THE TABLET

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## **UP FRONT AND PERSONAL**

### **Helping Others Find Addiction Solutions**

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In “The Divine Comedy,” Dante places a sign at the gateway to hell that reads, “Lasciate ogni speranza, voi ch’entrate.” Translated, it reads, “Abandon all hope, ye who enter here.”

The description of hell as the abandonment of all hope is a good metaphor for life under the control of some addictive substance or behavior. Any of us who has lived through the seemingly endless cycle of abuse can relate to the hopelessness of not being able to stop whatever it is — drinking, gambling, overeating — that we know is causing our unhappiness.

There are hundreds of groups that use the Twelve Step Method of Recovery. The first to implement the Twelve Steps was Alcoholics Anonymous, founded by Bill Wilson and Dr. Bob Smith in 1935. Its main text, known as the “Big Book,” begins with Wilson telling of his own history in the first chapter. After offering enough information for anyone with a drinking problem to find something to which he can relate, the second chapter has the hopeful title, “There is a solution.”

At present, I am the chairman of the diocese’s Committee on Health and Wellness. Using my experience with the Twelve Steps, it is my responsibility to help others trust that there is a solution to the misery in which so many live. The difficulty is that, at times, the person suffering from the addiction fears the imaginary stigma attached to revealing a problem.

Many believe that a solution is available for everyone except themselves — addicts frequently consider themselves the proverbial exception to the rule. And, of course, some obstinately just do not want to admit they need to change. Often, interventions are necessary when people around the sufferer believe he deserves a better quality of life than he is experiencing. They want to help him achieve it because they know he cannot do it alone.

September is National Recovery Month. This commemoration began in 1989 to celebrate the successes of the many men and women currently living substance-free lives and finding happiness as well as those programs and individuals who helped them reach out for help.

But it also serves as an invitation. It gives us the opportunity to reflect on our behaviors and remember the many still sick and suffering individuals who might benefit from encouragement.

Recovery is about hope: There is a solution for those who want it and are willing to do whatever it takes to find it.