

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Each one of us has stood at a turning point where the patterns we learned in a dysfunctional home met a window of grace and we became willing to do what we previously would not do: ask for help and follow a new set of directions. For many adult children, that turning point is not only about substances or behaviors. It is about the internal world we carried into adulthood, including fear, people pleasing, perfectionism, control, isolation, and an overdeveloped sense of responsibility for others. In that moment, self-reliance turns into a need for God, leaving us with what we might call a poverty of spirit. We may not have chosen the home we grew up in, but we can choose what we do with the openness that follows.

To be poor in spirit means we stop pretending we can outthink our wounds or outwork our anxiety. It means becoming an empty vessel, available for the grace of God to be poured in. Just like clay has to be soft and malleable for a potter to shape it, we are called to humility that allows God to take the lead. Rather than seeking comfort in coping roles or emotional defenses, we begin to find solace in something quieter and stronger—living another day grounded in truth, boundaries, and trust. We get to live with the integrity of daily action that strengthens our recovery and our reliance on God's grace.

It can be easy to confuse desperation with courage. We might be more willing to pursue healing when we feel overwhelmed or abandoned than when life seems stable. Yet recovery teaches us to capitalize on early willingness and build long lasting traits that keep us devoted to God and our healing. The goal is not to stay desperate. The goal is to stay willing.

Both 12-step recovery and the Catholic faith offer guideposts for what a joyful life looks like. One of the most direct descriptions is found in this Sunday's gospel reading (Matthew 5:1-10), as Jesus proclaims the Beatitudes to an attentive crowd:

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain, and after he had sat down, his disciples came to him. He began to teach them, saying: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land. Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

For adult children, the Beatitudes offer a new map for the inner life. Mourning becomes permission to grieve what we did not receive and what we lost, without denying it or minimizing it. Meekness becomes strength that does not need to control. Hunger and thirst for righteousness becomes a desire to live in truth instead of old scripts. Peacemaking becomes learning to set healthy boundaries and speak honestly, even when it feels risky. Poverty of spirit keeps us teachable, reminding us that God can parent and restore what was damaged.

This is where desperation matures into courage. We keep practicing spiritual disciplines after the crisis passes. We stay connected to others, tell the truth about what we feel,

and invite God into our fear. Over time, we become less reactive and more rooted. The kingdom of heaven draws near as we live with humility, clarity, and trust, one day at a time.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What childhood role or coping pattern still shapes your choices today?

- Which Beatitude speaks most directly to your healing right now, and why?

- What boundary or spiritual practice helps you stay grounded when fear or people pleasing rises

MASS READINGS

FIRST READING Zephaniah 2:3; 3:12-13
RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 146:6-7, 8-9, 9-10
SECOND READING 1 Corinthians 1:26-31
GOSPEL Matthew 5:1-12a