

# FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Each one of us who has been impacted by a loved one's addiction has stood at a turning point where our usual ways of coping stopped working. We became willing to do what we previously would not do: ask for help and follow a new set of directions. 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 circumstances that brought us there, but we can choose what we do with the openness that follows.

To be poor in spirit means we stop pretending we can manage another person's choices, outcomes, or healing. 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 control, rescuing, fixing, or endless mental rehearsals, we begin to find solace in something quieter and stronger—living another day grounded in faith, boundaries, and trust. We get to live with the integrity of daily action that strengthens our serenity and our reliance on God's grace.

It can be easy to confuse desperation with courage. We might be more willing to surrender when things are falling apart than when things seem to be going well. Yet recovery teaches us to capitalize on that 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 those of us who love someone struggling with addiction, the Beatitudes describe a way of living that is often the opposite of our instincts. When fear rises, we may try to control. When uncertainty grows, we may try to fix. When we are hurt, we may lash out, withdraw, or replay old conversations in our minds. Jesus offers another path. Poverty of spirit becomes the willingness to admit we cannot manage another person's choices, and that our peace cannot depend on their behavior. Mourning becomes honest grief, not denial. Meekness becomes strength that does not force outcomes. Mercy becomes the ability to stay compassionate without enabling. Peacemaking becomes choosing calm, clear boundaries and prayerful action over emotional chaos.

This is where desperation matures into courage. We keep practicing spiritual disciplines after the crisis passes. We return to meetings, seek counsel, pray simply, and take the

next right action. Over time, God reshapes our hearts. We begin to experience freedom even if our loved one is still struggling. The kingdom of heaven draws near when we live in truth, trust, and steady surrender, one day at a time.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Where do you notice control, rescuing, or fixing showing up most in your life right now?
- Which Beatitude feels hardest to live out in your current circumstances, and why?
- What boundary or spiritual practice helps you protect serenity while still loving well?

## 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