

FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Many of us grew up in homes shaped by addiction, dysfunction, emotional absence, or instability. Some of our wounds were not of our choosing. As children, we adapted in order to survive environments that felt unpredictable or unsafe. We may have learned to stay quiet, to overachieve, to take care of others, to avoid conflict, or to disconnect from our feelings. These survival behaviors helped us get through childhood, but in adulthood we often discover that the same patterns keep old wounds open. What once protected us can now limit our relationships, our peace, and our sense of identity.

The Twelve Steps help us approach this truth with compassion rather than blame. Step One invites us to admit powerlessness over the past and over patterns we cannot manage alone. This honesty is not about criticizing ourselves for how we coped; it is about recognizing that those coping strategies no longer serve us. Denial kept us repeating childhood responses in adult situations. When we accept that our old ways of managing fear, conflict, or emotion are not working, surrender opens space for grace.

As we grow spiritually, recovery becomes learning new ways to respond to life. Even when familiar fears, shame, or emotional triggers arise, something in us begins to shift. We become more aware of our reactions and more grounded in the present moment. Instead of automatically falling into people-pleasing, withdrawal, or control, we learn to pause, pray, and choose differently. As *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* says, “It never occurred to us that we needed to change ourselves to meet conditions, whatever they were” (p. 47). Healing does not come from rewriting the past, but from changing how we live today.

This Sunday’s first reading connects healing with love in action (Isaiah 58:7-10):

Thus says the Lord: Share your bread with the hungry, shelter the oppressed and the homeless; clothe the naked when you see them, and do not turn your back on your own. Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your wound shall quickly be healed; your vindication shall go before you, and the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard.

For many of us, learning to love in action begins with how we treat ourselves. Boundaries, honesty, self-compassion, and healthy connection are forms of love that help wounds heal. As our hearts widen, we move from survival into relationship and trust.

The Letter to the Hebrews reminds us that Christ understands suffering. Because He was tested in what He suffered, He is able to help those who are being tested (Hebrews 2:18). In recovery, we begin to see our past with greater gentleness. Our shared experience of brokenness becomes a place of connection, not shame.

Saint Paul speaks of coming in weakness, not persuasive strength, but reliance on God’s power (1 Corinthians 2:3-5):

I came to you in weakness and fear and much trembling, and my message and my proclamation were not with persuasive words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of Spirit and power, so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God.

Our healing does not come from perfection or performance, but from honesty and willingness. God meets us in our vulnerability.

Finally, Jesus says, “You are the light of the world” (Matthew 5:14-16). Our light shines each time we break an old pattern and choose a healthier response. What once felt like darkness in our family history can become a place where grace enters. Over time, our healing allows us to be a safe, grounded presence for others who are still learning how to live differently.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What survival behaviors from childhood still keep old wounds open today?
- Where is God inviting you to respond differently instead of repeating old patterns?
- How has your healing helped you relate to others with greater understanding?

MASS READINGS

FIRST READING Isaiah 58:7-10

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 112:4-5, 6-7, 8-9

SECOND READING 1 Corinthians 2:1-5

GOSPEL Matthew 5:13-16