

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Recovery from dysfunctional family systems often begins with awareness, but awareness alone does not complete the work. We may recognize old patterns, understand where they came from, and sincerely want to live differently, yet still feel pulled back into familiar roles. Lasting healing requires more than insight. It calls for surrender, practice, and a willingness to let go of survival patterns that once helped us cope.

Saint Paul offers a meaningful image for this process in this Sunday's second reading (Romans 6:3-11):

Are you unaware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life.

For adult children of dysfunctional homes, this can speak to the painful but freeing process of letting the old way die. Some patterns were formed for good reasons. People-pleasing, perfectionism, emotional withdrawal, control, caretaking, or constant alertness may have helped us survive. Yet these patterns can keep us from living freely now.

This movement connects with Step One. We begin to admit that our lives have become unmanageable when we rely on old coping strategies to navigate present relationships. We may see that our reactions are not always about the current moment. A tone of voice, silence, disappointment, or conflict may awaken fears from long ago. Step One invites us to stop denying the impact of these patterns and become willing to receive help.

This realization is unsettling. Old roles may feel like identity. We may wonder who we are if we are not fixing, performing, disappearing, managing, or keeping everyone comfortable.

Letting go can feel risky because those patterns once provided a sense of safety. Yet recovery helps us recognize that what once protected us may now be limiting our capacity for honesty, intimacy, and peace.

Saint Paul's words remind us that death to the old life is not the end of the story. Christ is raised, and through Him new life becomes possible. Our past does not have the final word. We are not trapped by the family system that shaped us. Grace makes it possible to respond differently, one moment at a time.

The Gospel offers another angle on this transformation (Matthew 10:37-42). Jesus speaks about placing Him above every other attachment. For adult children, this may include the painful work of reordering family loyalties, expectations, and inherited roles. Honoring others does not mean remaining bound to unhealthy patterns. Following Christ may require learning to live from truth rather than fear.

In practical terms, this new life grows through small choices. We pause before reacting. We notice what is happening in our bodies and emotions. We speak honestly in safe relationships. We set boundaries without overexplaining. We practice asking for what we need instead of assuming our needs do not matter. These actions may feel uncomfortable, but they help form a new way of living.

The Gospel's final image also matters. Jesus says that even a cup of cold water given to another will not lose its reward. For adult children, acts of honesty and care can be meaningful signs of change. We may offer presence without performing, say no without panic, or receive kindness without suspicion. These responses help us practice a new way of belonging.

Recovery is not about rejecting our past or blaming others forever. It is about living differently in the present. We can acknowledge what happened, grieve what was missing, take responsibility for our healing, and become open to healthier connection.

As we continue this journey, we are invited to trust that new life is possible. In Christ, the old patterns do not have to define us. We can learn to live with greater freedom, stability, and love, one day at a time.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What survival patterns are you being invited to release in this season?
- When do you notice yourself reacting from old roles rather than present reality?
- What small response could help you practice a new way of belonging?

MASS READINGS

FIRST READING 2 Kings 4:8-11, 14-16a

RESP. PS. Psalm 89:2-3, 16-17, 18-19

SECOND READING Romans 6:3-4, 8-11

GOSPEL Matthew 10:37-42