

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Family recovery often begins with a painful discovery: the truth may be simple, but living it takes time. We may know that we did not cause another person's addiction, cannot control it, and cannot cure it, yet still find ourselves reacting as if everything depends on us. We attend meetings, pray, set boundaries, and seek counsel, but fear can still pull us back into monitoring, rescuing, or over-functioning.

This Sunday's gospel offers a helpful image through the parable of the sower (Matthew 13:1-23). Jesus describes seed falling on several kinds of ground. Some lands on the path and is quickly taken away. Some falls on rocky ground, where it springs up but cannot develop roots. Some falls among thorns, where competing growth chokes it. Some falls on rich soil and bears fruit.

In our own recovery journey, we might recognize each kind of soil within ourselves. There are times when we hear a truth, such as "keep the focus on yourself," but it stays on the surface. There are moments when we feel hopeful after a meeting, only to lose that clarity when a loved one relapses, lies, withdraws, or creates chaos. At other times, fear, resentment, shame, and anxiety act like thorns, choking the peace we are trying to cultivate.

The parable invites us to ask not only what we should do, but what kind of soil we are becoming. Al-Anon wisdom helps us make this shift. We learn to detach with love, to stop treating another person's crisis as our identity, and to practice serenity by accepting what we cannot change. This does not mean becoming indifferent. It means allowing God to reorder our love so that compassion is not confused with control.

The Twelve Steps help prepare this soil. Step One breaks up denial and false responsibility. Steps Two and Three open us to God's care when our own efforts cannot bring peace. Steps Four through Nine help remove resentments, fears, and patterns of enabling or avoidance that keep us stuck. Steps Ten, Eleven, and Twelve help us maintain spiritual awareness and offer support to others without taking over their lives.

This work is ongoing. A new crisis may reveal hard places in us. A painful memory may expose rocky soil. A familiar worry may show us where thorns are growing again. Recovery invites us to notice these things without despair. We can pause, pray, call someone, and return to what is ours to do.

Fellowship is essential, especially because fear can make isolation feel reasonable. In family recovery, we often need other people to help us sort out what belongs to us and what does not. Others in recovery help us recognize when our thinking becomes clouded by fear. They remind us that our loved one has a Higher Power, and it is not us. This is one of the most freeing and difficult truths we learn. Their experience helps us trust that growth can happen even when circumstances remain uncertain.

Over time, fruit begins to appear, often in quiet ways that may not be obvious to others. We respond with more calm, speak with greater honesty, and set boundaries without punishment. We love more freely because we are less consumed by control. The situation may not change as quickly as we hope, and our loved one might still struggle, but our hearts begin to change. We become less driven by panic and more capable of acting from serenity.

The parable of the sower reminds us that growth requires care. As we continue in family recovery, we are invited to tend the soil of our own lives, trusting that God can bring fruit from patience, truth, and surrender.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Where do you notice your focus shifting toward controlling others instead of tending to your own growth?

- What "thorns" such as fear, resentment, or anxiety are crowding out your peace right now?

- How is fellowship helping you stay grounded and focused on your own recovery?

MASS READINGS

FIRST READING Isaiah 55:10-11

RESP. PS. Psalm 65:10, 11, 12-13, 14

SECOND READING Romans 8:18-23

GOSPEL Matthew 13:1-23