

Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time



As we seek freedom from the hold that addiction has had on us and our families, it is imperative that we find an environment where spiritual growth can be uninhibited. In this Sunday's Gospel Reading, Jesus describes to the large crowd following him the conditions necessary for a fruitful spiritual life:

*"A sower went out to sow.
And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path,
and birds came and ate it up.
Some fell on rocky ground, where it had little soil.
It sprang up at once because the soil was not deep,
and when the sun rose it was scorched,
and it withered for lack of roots.
Some seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew
up and choked it.
But some seed fell on rich soil, and produced fruit, a
hundred or sixty or thirtyfold.
Whoever has ears ought to hear."*

It is not often that we hear Jesus explain the meaning behind one of his parables, although in this case he takes time to make sure his message is known:

*"Hear then the parable of the sower.
The seed sown on the path is the one
who hears the word of the kingdom without
understanding it,
and the evil one comes and steals away
what was sown in his heart.
The seed sown on rocky ground
is the one who hears the word and receives it at once
with joy.
But he has no root and lasts only for a time.
When some tribulation or persecution comes because
of the word,
he immediately falls away.
The seed sown among thorns is the one who hears the
word,
but then worldly anxiety and the lure of riches choke
the word
and it bears no fruit.
But the seed sown on rich soil
is the one who hears the word and understands it,
who indeed bears fruit and yields a hundred or sixty
or thirtyfold."*

It is impossible to know what new life awaits us as we stand at the beginning of our recovery journey or even in the midst of it. A new seed is planted by God, watered by faith, and nourished by the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

The Twelve Steps of addiction recovery provide a framework for finding and maintaining rich soil. When neglected, obstacles come our way that can uproot us. Establishing a solid foundation in the early days, weeks, and months of recovery can go a long way to provide momentum toward freedom. It doesn't stop there, as we are given an opportunity to remain close to God through daily honest inventory, prayer and meditation, and service to others.

Recovery must never be one of the many things resting on our plate. Instead, it must be the plate upon which everything in our lives rest. Emmet Fox, a spiritual leader of the early twentieth century, puts it best: "Sooner or later you will have to put God first in your life. God must become the only thing that really matters. It need not be, and better not be, the only thing in your life, but it must be the first thing. When that happens your life becomes simple, richer, and infinitely more worthwhile."

We are going to face both trials and triumphs in our recovery journey. Both can shake us, but if we are standing upon solid ground we can go anywhere and do anything while not taking the burdens all upon ourselves. As we heard last week, Jesus offers his companionship and support. The way of life he's laid out for us allows us to share our burdens with him and, thus, discover freedom and happiness.

Reflection Questions

- How does the environment around you impact your recovery and pursuit of spiritual growth?
- Which of the Twelve Steps is helping you find or maintain rich soil in your recovery?
- How do you describe whether your recovery is one of many things on your plate or if it is the plate upon which everything rests?

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Sunday Mass Readings this Week

First Reading: Isaiah 55:10-11

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 65:10, 11, 12-13, 14

Second Reading: Romans 8:18-23

Gospel: Matthew 13:1-23