

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

There are moments in recovery when we begin to see that growth is not only about what we do, but about what we are becoming. We may be showing up to meetings, working the steps, and making sincere efforts to change, yet still feel stuck or inconsistent. Over time, we come to realize that recovery is not simply about effort. It is also about the condition of our hearts and the environment we allow that growth to take place.

This Sunday's gospel offers a powerful image for understanding this process through the parable of the sower (Matthew 13:1–23). Jesus describes a sower scattering seed across different types of ground. Some falls on the path and is quickly taken away. Some falls on rocky ground, where it springs up but has no root and withers under pressure. Some falls among thorns, where it is choked by competing growth. And some falls on rich soil, where it bears fruit in abundance.

In recovery from addictions, compulsions, and unhealthy attachments, we can often see ourselves in each of these conditions at different times. There may be moments when we hear truth but do not fully receive it, and it quickly fades. There may be seasons when we feel inspired and motivated, only to struggle when difficulty or discomfort arises. At other times, we may find that anxiety, distraction, or temptations begin to crowd out the progress we are trying to make.

This parable invites us to shift our focus. Instead of asking only what we need to do, we begin to ask what kind of soil we are cultivating. Recovery is not just about planting new ideas or behaviors. It is about creating the conditions where those seeds can take root and grow.

The Twelve Steps provide a framework for this kind of growth. Step One breaks up the hardness of denial and self-reliance. Steps Two and Three begin to open the soil through willingness and trust in God. Steps Four through Nine help remove the rocks and thorns—resentments, fears, and past harms—that can prevent growth. Steps Ten, Eleven, and Twelve help us maintain and nurture that soil through daily practice, prayer, and service.

This process is ongoing. Even after experiencing growth, we may notice areas where the soil becomes hardened again or where new distractions begin to take hold. Recovery calls us to remain attentive, not in a way that is anxious or controlling, but in a way that is honest and responsive.

We also come to recognize that we do not cultivate this soil alone. God is the one who plants and brings growth. Our role is to remain willing, to stay connected, and to cooperate with the grace that is being offered. Fellowship plays an important role in this as well. Others help us see what we may miss, encourage us when we feel discouraged, and remind us of the truth when our perspective becomes clouded.

Over time, we begin to see fruit. This fruit may not always be dramatic, but it is real. We may notice greater patience, honesty, humility, and peace. We may respond differently to situations that once triggered us. We may become more available to others and more grounded in our relationship with God.

The parable of the sower reminds us that growth is possible, but it is not automatic. It depends on our willingness to remain open, to address what gets in the way, and to continue

showing up. As we continue in recovery, we are invited to tend to the soil of our lives, trusting that God will bring about the growth in His time.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Which type of “soil” do you most relate to in this season of recovery, and why?

- What “rocks” or “thorns” might be preventing deeper growth in your life right now?

- What daily practices help you remain open and receptive to the work God is doing in you?

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