

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Recovery from lust addiction often begins with a desire to stop, but lasting freedom requires more than stopping. We may attend meetings, make commitments, install safeguards, and sincerely want change, yet still find ourselves vulnerable to old patterns. Over time, we begin to understand that recovery is not only about removing behavior. It is about cultivating an inner life where truth, chastity, humility, and connection can take root.

This Sunday's gospel gives us a powerful image through the parable of the sower (Matthew 13:1–23). Jesus describes seed falling on different kinds of ground. Some falls on the path and is taken away. Some falls on rocky ground, where it rises quickly but withers because it has no root. Some falls among thorns and is choked. Some falls on rich soil and bears fruit.

In lust addiction recovery, these soils can describe the condition of our hearts. At times, we hear truth about dignity, sobriety, and freedom, but we remain guarded and it does not take hold. At other times, we feel motivated after confession, a meeting, or a painful consequence, but the roots are shallow. When stress, loneliness, resentment, or temptation comes, we return to old escapes. The thorns may include secrecy, fantasy, entitlement, screens, isolation, or the belief that we can manage lust privately.

The parable invites us to look deeper than outward behavior. 12-step recovery from lust emphasizes sobriety, surrender, and rigorous honesty. These are not merely program words. They describe the soil where freedom can grow. If we keep secrets, avoid accountability, or maintain access to what fuels lust, we should not be surprised when the seed struggles to bear fruit.

The Twelve Steps help prepare this soil. Step One breaks through denial and self-reliance. Steps Two and Three open us to God's power and care. Steps Four through Nine help remove resentments, fears, shame, dishonesty, and harms done to others. Steps Ten, Eleven, and Twelve help us stay spiritually awake through daily inventory, prayer, outreach, and service.

This work also requires practical attention to our environment, because good intentions alone rarely survive easy access and hidden compromise. Lust addiction typically has immediate access to triggers through technology, memory, fantasy, and patterns of looking. Cultivating rich soil may require boundaries around screens, honest check-ins, custody of the eyes, and willingness to reach out before temptation becomes a crisis. These actions are not about shame. They protect the conditions needed for freedom and help us choose sobriety before our thinking becomes distorted.

Fellowship is essential because isolation hardens the soil and secrecy gives lust room to grow. When we share honestly with a sponsor or trusted recovery companion, secrecy loses power. We begin to see that we are beloved children of God, not objects, failures, or problems to be hidden. Others help us remember the truth when our thinking becomes distorted. They also help us practice a different kind of intimacy, one rooted in honesty rather than hiding.

Over time, fruit begins to appear in ways that reach beyond abstinence. We may notice greater honesty, a quieter mind, deeper respect for others, and more freedom to love without using. We respond earlier when tempted and become less

willing to bargain with secrecy. These changes might be gradual, but they are real.

The parable of the sower reminds us that growth is possible, but not accidental. As we continue in recovery, we are invited to tend the soil of our hearts, remove what chokes life, and remain open to the grace that allows peace, joy, integrity, and purpose to grow.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What patterns or environments in your life are acting like “thorns” that choke out growth?
- How are you cultivating honesty and connection in your recovery today?
- What practical steps help you create conditions where lasting change can take root?

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