

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

There is a stage in recovery when we begin to see more clearly, not only our progress, but also our imperfections. We become aware of growth, but we also notice lingering defects, patterns, and contradictions within us. This can be discouraging if we expect transformation to be clean and immediate. Instead, recovery reveals something more honest: growth and imperfection often exist side by side.

This Sunday's gospel speaks directly into that tension through the parable of the weeds and the wheat (Matthew 13:24-30). Jesus describes a field where good seed has been sown, yet an enemy comes at night and sows weeds among it. When both begin to grow, the servants ask if they should pull up the weeds. The master replies, *"No, if you pull up the weeds you might uproot the wheat along with them. Let them grow together until harvest."*

This challenges the way many of us approach recovery. We want clarity. We want to separate what is good from what is not and remove anything that does not belong. We want quick results and visible change. Yet the gospel suggests something different. Growth takes time, and not everything can or should be forced.

In recovery, we often encounter this reality within ourselves. We see honesty growing, yet still struggle with fear. We make progress in one area, while another remains difficult. The temptation is to become discouraged or overly critical, either of ourselves or of others. This is where the wisdom of recovery slogans becomes helpful. "Progress, not perfection" reminds us that transformation is gradual. "Easy does it" calls us to patience. "First things first" keeps us focused on what is in front of us rather than trying to fix everything at once.

The second reading offers a deeper reassurance about how God works within this process. We hear that God searches hearts and understands what is unfolding within us, even when we do not fully understand it ourselves (Romans 8:26-27). This means we do not need to judge the entire process or rush its outcome. God is already at work, even in the parts of our lives that feel unfinished.

This also changes how we view others. It becomes easy to compare, to judge progress, or to assume we understand another person's path. The parable makes it clear that such judgment is not ours to make. The work of sorting and separating belongs to God. Our role is to remain faithful to our own growth and to extend the same patience and mercy that we have received.

Recovery slogans echo this truth in simple but practical ways. "Live and let live" encourages us to release control over others. "Let go and let God" reminds us that we are not the ones responsible for outcomes. These are not passive statements. They reflect a deeper trust that God is active in ways we cannot see.

This does not mean we ignore what needs attention. The Twelve Steps give us clear direction for examining our lives, making amends, and continuing to grow. But they do so in an ordered and sustainable way. We clean our side of the street, we trust God with what we cannot control, and we stay available to help others.

Over time, we begin to experience a different kind of peace. We become less reactive to imperfection, both in ourselves and in others. We learn to stay engaged without becoming overwhelmed. We trust that God is not finished with us.

The parable of the weeds and wheat reminds us that recovery is not about achieving perfection. It is about remaining faithful in

the midst of growth. As we continue this journey, we are invited to practice patience, trust the process, and allow God to bring about the harvest in His time.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Where do you find yourself expecting perfection instead of allowing for gradual growth?

- How do you respond when you see both progress and struggle within yourself?

- What helps you trust God's timing instead of trying to force change?

MASS READINGS

FIRST READING Wisdom 12:13, 16-19

RESP. PS. Psalm 86:5-6, 9-10, 15-16

SECOND READING Romans 8:26-27

GOSPEL Matthew 13:24-43