



TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Most of us can remember hearing something in recovery that we did not want to hear. Someone saw through an excuse, challenged a behavior we had minimized, or pointed out a pattern we were not ready to admit. We may not have appreciated it at the time. Looking back, that uncomfortable conversation may have been one of the ways God began leading us toward freedom.

This Sunday's readings remind us that love and truth belong together. In the first reading, the Lord appoints Ezekiel as a watchman and tells him to warn others when danger is near (Ezekiel 33:7–9). Jesus carries that responsibility into the life of the Church in Sunday's gospel: *"If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone"* (Matthew 18:15).

Notice the spirit of Jesus' instruction. He does not begin with public embarrassment, gossip, or gathering allies. He begins privately. The goal is not to prove someone wrong or win an argument. Jesus says, *"If he listens to you, you have won over your brother"* (Matthew 18:15). The purpose of correction is restoration.

This is deeply relevant to recovery. Addiction thrives in secrecy, denial, and distorted thinking. Left to ourselves, we can become skilled at explaining away what is obvious to everyone else. We need people who care enough to tell us the truth. A sponsor, friend, priest, counselor, spouse, or fellow group member may recognize a pattern we cannot yet see. Their honesty can feel uncomfortable, but it can also become an instrument of grace.

Receiving correction requires humility. Our first reaction may be defensiveness, shame, anger, or the desire to explain ourselves. Recovery invites us to pause and ask whether

there is truth in what we are hearing. We do not have to accept every criticism as accurate, but neither should we dismiss difficult feedback simply because it hurts. Sometimes the words we resist most strongly are the ones we most need to examine.

Speaking truth requires humility as well. Recovery does not make us responsible for managing other people's lives. We can become preoccupied with another person's defects while avoiding our own inventory. Jesus calls us to speak honestly when love requires it, but then to release the outcome. We can tell the truth clearly and respectfully. We cannot force another person to receive it.

Saint Paul gives us the measure for these conversations in the second reading: *"Love does no evil to the neighbor; hence, love is the fulfillment of the law"* (Romans 13:10). Truth without love can become harshness. Love without truth can become enabling. Mature recovery asks us to hold both together.

This is one reason fellowship is so important. Jesus promises, *"Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them"* (Matthew 18:20). A healthy recovery community is more than a place where we feel understood. It is a place where we can become known, challenged, encouraged, forgiven, and reminded of what is true when our own thinking becomes unreliable.

Sometimes we are the person who needs to speak. Sometimes we are the person who needs to listen. Recovery grows stronger when we stop treating correction as rejection and stop confusing honesty with control. We need people who love us enough to tell us the truth, and we need the humility to receive it when they do.

Christ is present in this kind of fellowship. When truth and mercy are held together, difficult conversations can become places of grace. We do not save or fix one another, but we can help one another remain awake, honest, and pointed toward the One who does.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- When have you resisted something someone told you in recovery, only to recognize later that there was truth in it?
- When you need to address another person's behavior, are you more likely to avoid the conversation, become harsh, or try to control the outcome? What might love ask of you instead?
- Who has permission to speak honestly into your recovery, and what helps you remain humble and teachable when the truth is difficult to hear?

MASS READINGS

FIRST READING Ezekiel 33:7–9

RESP. PS. Psalm 95:1–2, 6–7, 8–9

SECOND READING Romans 13:8–10

GOSPEL Matthew 18:15–20