



## Friday of the 1st Week of Lent



**Date:** Friday, March 14, 2025 | **Season:** Lent | **Year:** C

**First Reading:** Ezekiel 18:21–28

**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 130:1–8 | **Response:** Psalm 130:3

**Gospel Acclamation:** Ezekiel 18:31

**Gospel Reading:** Matthew 5:20–26

**Preached at:** the Chapel of the Most Holy Name, Kolvenbach House in the Archdiocese of Lusaka, Zambia.

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**T**here is a moment in every person’s life when they wonder, “Is it too late for me?” We see the weight of our mistakes, the words we wish we could take back, the opportunities lost, the bridges burned. We wonder if we’ve strayed too far, sinned too much, hurt too many. And then, we hear the words of the prophet Ezekiel:

“If the wicked man turns away from all the sins he has committed... he shall live; he shall not die.”

God does not desire the death of the sinner. He desires repentance. And more than that—He desires restoration. He is not waiting to tally up our failures; He is waiting to welcome us home.

But the reading from Ezekiel makes one thing clear: repentance is not a feeling. It is not mere regret or sadness. It is a turning. A movement. A choice to step away from the darkness and walk toward the light. If we hear this call and respond, then as the Psalmist cries out today:

“With the Lord there is mercy, and fullness of redemption.”

And yet, Jesus takes this one step further. It is not enough to turn back to God if we still hold anger in our hearts. It is not enough to seek His mercy if we refuse to offer it to our sister or brother.

“Go first and be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift.”

How radical this is! Jesus is saying that reconciliation comes before worship. That our prayers, our Masses, our devotions—they are not separate from our relationships with one another. If we hold onto resentment, if we refuse to forgive, then we have left part of our hearts in darkness.

And how much this applies today—not only in our personal lives, but in our wider society. Here in Zambia, there are many wounds. Political tensions, economic inequalities, divisions between rich and poor. We cannot simply pray for peace while harboring indifference to those who struggle. We cannot ask for God’s mercy while refusing to work for justice.

Today, we might take inspiration from Blessed Daniel Brottier, who worked tirelessly to reconcile communities torn apart by war and injustice. He did not wait for others to act—he went first. He built schools, cared for orphans, and worked for peace, knowing that true righteousness is more than just avoiding sin; it is actively choosing love.

So today, while we keep Pope Francis in our prayers, we ask:

- Where in my life do I need to seek reconciliation?
- What burdens of resentment or unforgiveness am I still carrying?
- How is God calling me not just to repent, but to act—to make a choice for love?

With the Lord, there is mercy. With the Lord, there is redemption. But to receive it fully, we must be willing to offer it to others.

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