



Monday of the 11th Week in Ordinary Time



Date: Monday, June 16, 2025 | **Season:** Ordinary Time after Easter | **Year:** C

First Reading: 2 Corinthians 6:1–10

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 98:1, 2b–4 | **Response:** Psalm 98:2a

Gospel Acclamation: Psalm 119:105

Gospel Reading: Matthew 5:38–42

Preached at: the Chapel of Emmaus House in the Archdiocese of Harare, Zimbabwe.

There is something quietly transformative about the way St. Paul speaks today—not in defiance, but in the unwavering serenity of someone who has been broken open by suffering and found there, not despair, but grace. His is not the voice of a hardened warrior but of a servant who has surrendered everything but hope. Beaten, shipwrecked, starved, imprisoned—Paul lists these not to glorify pain, but to proclaim what God can do through it. In the bruises, the chains, and the cold, he found Christ closer than ever. And this, dear friends, is the quiet heart of the Christian mystery: that weakness, offered to God, becomes a doorway for divine power. What the world discards, God redeems.

This same paradox meets us in our own lives. We long for comfort and security, yet Christ invites us to follow Him into the places of discomfort, injustice, and even loss—because it is there, precisely there, that His grace flows most freely. We are not called to escape hardship, but to bear it with integrity. We are not asked to prove ourselves through dominance, but to reveal God’s love through endurance, gentleness, and mercy. Paul does not lash out at his persecutors. He simply presses on. He does not demand revenge; he chooses to testify. That choice is our invitation too.

The psalm today invites us into that same defiant joy: “Sing to the Lord a new song... proclaim His salvation day after day.” It is not easy to sing when your voice is cracked with sorrow, or your heart is heavy with unanswered prayers. And yet, that is precisely when our song matters most. In the streets of Lusaka or Harare, in rural parishes or university lecture halls, the cry for justice still rises. And so must our song. Not a song of naïve optimism, but of stubborn hope—a

melody that says, even here, even now, God is at work. To praise God amidst injustice is not denial; it is declaration. It is to say: we believe love will outlast hatred, peace will outlast conflict, justice will rise like the dawn.

Then comes Jesus' teaching—a word so bold it unsettles even the well-formed conscience. “Do not resist an evildoer,” He says. Not because evil should triumph, but because the cycle of retribution must be broken. Turn the other cheek. Give your cloak. Walk the extra mile. These are not metaphors for cowardice, but commands to subvert violence with courageous love. Jesus is not asking us to roll over in the face of harm, but to resist the world's methods of retaliation. Evil cannot be healed by becoming its mirror. To resist with love is far harder—and infinitely more powerful—than to retaliate with fists.

This teaching has urgent resonance in Zimbabwe today. In a land still marked by colonial scars, economic strife, and political tension, the temptation is always toward vengeance. Whether in disputes over land or power, language or tribe, the wounds of history run deep. But what if healing is not found in reclaiming what was taken, but in reimagining what we could become? What if justice could be more than payback—what if it could be restoration?

The Church, especially in her recent centuries, has grown in this understanding. No longer content with simply blessing the powerful or justifying conflict, she has begun to echo Christ's call more clearly: peace is not passive; it is prophetic. Catholic Social Teaching insists that peace is built not on silence or submission, but on justice—true justice that uplifts the poor, protects the dignity of every human life, and reconciles enemies into neighbours. We cannot preach Christ crucified while wielding the tools of empire. We cannot speak of the cross if we are unwilling to bear it.

And yet, this is difficult. Some may ask—and rightly so—how we can love those who hurt us, how we can forgive those who wrong our families, how we can turn the other cheek when our very survival is at stake. Jesus never promised it would be easy. But He did promise that it is the way that leads to life. It is not submission to injustice—it is a refusal to become unjust. It is a bold act of moral imagination—the ability to envision a reality where love and justice triumph over hatred and violence—that dares to believe mercy is stronger than violence

I recall a moment when I was treated unjustly by someone I trusted. My first instinct was to strike back—not physically, but with words, with coldness, with silence. But something in me hesitated. I remembered today’s Gospel. And slowly, awkwardly, I began to pray for that person. I didn’t feel like it. But grace isn’t always a feeling. Over time, something softened. The bitterness ebbed. Forgiveness crept in—not all at once, but like dawn breaking after a long night. That encounter taught me what Jesus meant: to turn the other cheek is not weakness—it is the decision to rise above.

The Ignatian path invites us into this work of interior transformation. St. Ignatius urges us to pay attention to the movements of our soul, to ask in every situation: where is God here? In moments of desolation—when we feel slighted, ignored, oppressed—he challenges us not to flee, but to stand still, to discern. Where is Christ in this? What is He inviting me to let go of? What does love look like here? This is not abstract spirituality—it is discipleship with dirt under its nails and tears in its eyes. It is choosing peace not once, but every day, again and again.

So let us ask ourselves, as we begin this new week:

- Where in my life is God inviting me to respond to conflict with mercy instead of retaliation?
- What injustice have I grown numb to, and how can I become a voice for healing by supporting organizations that advocate for justice or by speaking out against inequality?
- Who do I need to forgive—not because they deserve it, but because Christ forgave me by starting with a simple prayer for their well-being?

May the God of all peace teach our hands not to strike but to build, our hearts not to harden but to open, and our lives not to echo the world’s violence, but to proclaim a love that bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things—and never fails.

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In preparing this homily, I consulted various resources to deepen my understanding of today's readings, including using Magisterium AI for assistance. The final content remains the responsibility of the author.