



## Saturday of the 13th Week in Ordinary Time



**Date:** Saturday, July 5, 2025 | **Season:** Ordinary Time after Easter | **Year:** C

**First Reading:** Genesis 27:1–5, 15–29

**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 135:1b–6 | **Response:** Psalm 135:3a

**Gospel Acclamation:** John 10:27

**Gospel Reading:** Matthew 9:14–17

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

**M**y brothers in Christ,

The human heart is a strange vessel. It holds both memory and hope, both ache and yearning. Like wineskins stretched by time, our souls can grow rigid with habit, worn by repetition, reluctant to contain the wild, fermenting grace of something new. But into that very resistance, into that tension between old and new, God pours His promise—and invites us to stretch.

Grace, after all, is not merely a feeling or a blessing. It is God’s life poured into ours, a participation in the divine nature. It is a gift, wholly unearned, infused by the Holy Spirit to heal, to sanctify, to transform. Grace is the help God gives us to respond to His call, to live as His adopted sons and daughters. It is the Spirit at work in us, stretching the soul toward its fullest freedom.

Today, the Word draws us into two homes: one filled with silence and deception, the other filled with questions and grace. In Genesis, we enter the twilight of Isaac’s life. His eyes have grown dim, and the future of his family seems as clouded as his sight. Rebekah, his wife, overhears his plan to bless their elder son Esau and, acting on her own understanding of God’s promise, orchestrates a deception that will change history. She clothes Jacob, the younger son, in goatskins and the scent of his brother, so that Isaac—confused by age and dulled senses—will unknowingly bestow the covenantal blessing on the wrong son.

It is an unsettling scene. There is manipulation, there is lying, and yet there is also something deeper: a desperate yearning to secure the blessing, to participate in God’s plan, even imperfectly. Jacob’s name itself, Ya’akov, means “heel-grab-

ber,” a name earned in the womb when he clutched at Esau’s heel, as though determined even then not to be left behind. The very name hints at a life of wrestling—wrestling with identity, with conscience, with God.

And yet, God does not revoke the blessing. He does not tear down what has been built through sin. Instead, He weaves grace through frailty, fulfilling His promise not because of human merit, but in spite of it. This is no licence for deceit, but it is a reassurance for the broken: that our story is not undone by our flaws. That God’s covenant is stronger than our missteps.

The psalmist, perhaps echoing the confusion and awe of such mercy, simply says: “Praise the Lord for the Lord is good. The Lord does whatever he wills.” This is not a God bound by our categories. He moves through history not as a judge obsessed with perfection, but as a Father who reclaims even crooked paths for His purpose. The psalm invites us to praise not because everything is neat, but because grace is still at work—unexpected, unearned, unshakable.

And then we come to Matthew’s Gospel, where the disciples of John—perhaps still tethered to the old wineskins of spiritual habit—ask Jesus, “Why do your disciples not fast?” In Jewish tradition, fasting was a sign of mourning or repentance—a way of acknowledging brokenness and longing for restoration. It was common among the Pharisees and John’s disciples, often linked to awaiting the coming of the Messiah. But Jesus, with startling clarity, compares himself to a bridegroom. Who mourns when the wedding feast is still unfolding? Who stitches a new cloth onto an old garment, or pours fermenting wine into cracked leather? These are images of joy, of movement, of dynamic change. Christ is saying: something new is here. Something alive. Something that won’t fit the old frame.

This newness is the work of the Holy Spirit—the Lord and Giver of Life, who is the very Love of God poured into our hearts, the supreme Gift who animates every renewal. It is the Holy Spirit who fills the wineskin with grace, who justifies and sanctifies, who enables us to respond to God’s call and become vessels of divine life.

To follow Christ is to allow the structure of our lives to expand, to stretch, to risk bursting. It is to stop clinging to what has always been and to open ourselves to what might yet become. And this is not merely a spiritual metaphor—it

is a concrete invitation. In Zimbabwe today, where old systems struggle to serve the new generation, where young people hunger for justice and opportunity while elders ache for peace and continuity, the Gospel offers more than commentary—it offers renewal.

We are called to shape lives and communities supple enough for God’s fermenting future. To form schools where curiosity is holy, parishes where truth can be spoken aloud, and communities where those on the edges are no longer left outside. Not because tradition must be abandoned, but because the tradition is alive—and alive things must breathe.

Catholic Social Teaching insists that the dignity of the human person is not an idea we agree with—it is a life we must honour. If our policies, our ministries, even our community decisions cannot hold the full weight of the poor, the young, the excluded, then it is not the wine that has failed—it is the wineskin that must be remade.

Saint Anthony Mary Zaccaria, a reformer in an age of spiritual lethargy, challenged both laity and clergy to renew their hearts with fervour, calling them not to nostalgia, but to holiness. His life shows us that holiness is never passive. It stretches. It transforms. It refuses to be poured into brittle skins of complacency.

And so we turn, as Ignatius taught us, to imaginative prayer. Picture yourself in Isaac’s tent, hearing the voice of someone you trust—and yet something feels off. What is God inviting you to see more clearly? Or place yourself among the wedding guests. The bridegroom is here. Are you still fasting? Or are you feasting on the joy of his presence?

So now, in that quiet space where prayer becomes conversation, ask yourself:

- Where in my life am I clinging to old patterns that no longer hold the life God wants to pour into me?
- Who is God calling me to bless—even if I feel unworthy or uncertain of how?
- What part of my heart, my habits, or my community must stretch to receive the new wine of Christ’s presence today?

May we be found faithful—not only in preserving the wine of God’s grace, but in crafting lives spacious enough to carry His Spirit into the world. And like Jacob—flawed, grasping, yet chosen—may we find, even in our weakness, that God still speaks blessing over us.

And may we stretch, too, toward peace: peace in our common life, and peace in the world—especially in Gaza, where lives are being torn, futures buried, and the dignity of every person cries out from the rubble. May the God who reclaims broken stories, who works even through deceit and failure, reclaim also this violence, and make of it—somehow, mysteriously—a path toward justice, mercy, and reconciliation.

Let us pray: Come, Holy Spirit, stretch the wineskins of this weary world. Amen.

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