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Monday of the 17th Week in Ordinary Time

Date: Monday, July 28, 2025 | **Season:** Ordinary Time after Easter | **Year:** C
First Reading: Exodus 32:15–24, 30–34
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 106:19–23 | **Response:** Psalm 106:1a
Gospel Acclamation: James 1:18
Gospel Reading: Matthew 13:31–35
Preached at: the Chapel of Richartz House **in the** Archdiocese of Harare, Zimbabwe**.**

Dear brothers,

It's not always the big battles that wear us down. Often, it's the waiting. The long, quiet stretches where nothing seems to happen. When prayers feel like they bounce off the ceiling. When God seems silent.

But silence doesn't mean absence. It doesn't mean that God has stopped working. The seed still grows underground. The yeast still rises in the dough. In that silence, God is shaping something slow and strong and sure.

That's where we find Israel today in Exodus. Moses is up the mountain, and they are stuck waiting. Days go by. No word. No sign. And in that silence, they grow restless. So they build something they can see. A golden calf. Something shiny. Something solid. It doesn't ask anything of them. But it also can't love them back.

When Moses comes down carrying the tablets—the Law, the gift of the covenant—he sees what's happened. His anger is real, but underneath it is grief. He's heartbroken. But he doesn't walk away. He turns to God in prayer. And his prayer is rooted not just in love for the people, but in trust in God's promises—those made long ago to Abraham, Isaac, and Israel. As Pope Benedict once put it, Moses speaks to God with the boldness of one who knows His heart. "Forgive them… or blot me out too." He's not trying to impress. He's standing in the breach. That's what intercession looks like: not loud or grand, but costly, faithful, and rooted in the promise of the covenant.

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And that's our calling too. As Jesuits in this house. As men asked to pray for the Church and Society that at times forgets, stumbles, and wanders. We're not here to fix it all or shout the loudest. We're here to be faithful. In silence. In prayer. In the daily offering of ourselves—like yeast hidden in the dough, like seeds that no one notices until the fruit comes.

That's how the Kingdom grows, Jesus tells us in the Gospel. Not through spectacle, but through small things—a mustard seed, a pinch of yeast. And that's what you are doing when you rise again to pray, when you intercede for a broken world, when you hold someone quietly before the Lord. You are planting grace in the dark.

And we see this quiet, faithful service exemplified in the lives of the saints we recall today.

Today, although not in Zimbabwe, the Church's calendar invites us to remember two groups of saints who show us what that hidden labour of love looks like in very different ways.

First, we honour St Victor I, Pope and Martyr. An African Pope of the early Church, he stood for unity in a time of real division, quietly guiding the Church through controversy and giving his life for the faith he had steadily served. His fidelity, even unto death, reminds us that real strength often looks like quiet perseverance.

And we can also recall that historically the Church celebrated Saints Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicholas—the first deacons. Men not called to the front of the room, but to the back kitchen. Not to power, but to the needs of the poor. They were entrusted with caring for widows, with ensuring fairness, with making sure no one was forgotten. Their holiness was lived at the table, not the pulpit. They remind us that the Church is built not only on those who speak, but on those who serve with humility and justice.

We give thanks too this morning for Paul Edward, who marks his 84th birthday, though he is away in England just now. We pray for a man whose long fidelity speaks quietly but clearly of God's grace at work over time.

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And we remember with affection Brother Tobias Tirivanhu, who died in this house in 2001—who according to his obituary was a joyful and deeply loved companion from Chishawasha to St Ignatius, from Glasgow to Mbare, Kubatana, and Makumbe. We're told that he brought the Spirit with him in a laugh, a lesson, a visit, a netball match. His life reminds us that holiness is not only learned but lived—often through practical love, unrecorded except in the hearts of those who were changed by it.

So today, let's offer our day like that. As a prayer. As a way of standing in the breach—for those who are struggling, forgetting, or drifting. Not with noise or big gestures, but with steady, loving faith.

And as we go, let's carry these questions with us into our prayer:

- Where am I tempted to stop waiting and settle for something easier?
- What quiet grace might God be growing in my waiting?
- Who needs me to stand in the gap today—with prayer, with patience, with love?

Amen.

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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.