



Tuesday of the 21st Week in Ordinary Time



Date: Tuesday, August 26, 2025 | **Season:** Ordinary Time after Easter | **Year:** C
First Reading: 1 Thessalonians 2:1–8
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 139:1–6 | **Response:** Psalm 139:1
Gospel Acclamation: Hebrews 4:12
Gospel Reading: Matthew 23:23–26
Preached at: the Chapel of Richartz House in the Archdiocese of Harare, Zimbabwe.

Today's readings lead us to the heart — the truth God sees beneath our words and works. In Catholic teaching the heart is not just where we feel; it is the centre of the person, the place of decision and encounter with God, the inner room where we stand before him without masks. The popes have put it plainly: the heart is where we cannot pretend; from the heart come good intentions and the desire for the good. Here the Holy Spirit moves us, opens our eyes, turns us back to God, and makes us more like Christ. This change is first grace, then effort. Grace begins; we respond.

Paul tells the Thessalonians that he came not to gain praise or profit, but to give himself. His courage after Philippi is not bravado; it is grace at work. He cares like a mother, shares not only the Gospel but his life. That is ministry: not performance, but presence. Zimbabwe needs this kind of leadership too — at home, in Church, in public life — people who serve from a true heart, not a crafted image.

Psalm 139 shows us how to pray from that place: “You search me and you know me.” In the Examen we let God look at our day with truth and mercy. No spin. No fear. This honesty is the soil of justice. We cannot fight hunger while ignoring the greed or fear inside us. We cannot preach mercy while nursing quiet contempt. God's kind gaze frees us to tell the truth and then to act.

In the Gospel Jesus warns religious people — us — about clean surfaces and dirty insides. He praises small devotions, but says they must serve the “weightier matters”: justice, mercy, faithfulness. This is where the virtue of religion helps. It is the habit that gives God his due and keeps all other virtues aimed at him. Its

main acts are devotion and prayer; they keep worship from becoming a show. True piety grows through meditation on God and steady spiritual exercises, so that the outside and the inside match.

What, then, is purity of heart? Not flawlessness, but a heart made undivided by grace. The Church teaches it comes through God's gift and our cooperation: chastity lived as love, clean intention, clean vision (what we look at and how we look), disciplined imagination and feelings, and prayer that keeps returning to God. Purity like this is never private. It bears fruit: mercy given, justice sought, faith lived.

Enter Melchizedek. He steps into Genesis briefly, blesses Abraham, offers bread and wine, and disappears. A king who blesses. A priest who gives. Some rabbis said he was Shem, the flood survivor — a bridge of blessing into a new world. The Church sees in him a sign of Christ, Priest and King. His offering points to the Eucharist.

And here is the strongest link. In the Mass, Christ gives us his own pure heart. The Eucharist is the source and summit of the unity we seek: inside and outside brought together. We do not make this unity; we receive it. Grace first; then our cooperation. As we receive, the Spirit reshapes us to Christ: our motives, our choices, our habits.

This is the gift our country needs: people whose public deeds flow from private truth. Not perfect people — truthful people. People who bless because they know they are blessed. Each of us can be a little Melchizedek: bringing peace at the school gate, in parish meetings, at the market stall; blessing with bread, with time, with a just word; letting our prayer and our work echo each other.

So this week, pray simply: Lord, clean the inside of my cup. In the Examen each evening, picture Jesus handing you a cup and looking at you with kindness. Tell him what is inside. Ask for his heart in exchange. Then choose one small act of justice or mercy that fits that prayer.

Like Paul, let us give not only the Gospel but ourselves.

Like the Psalmist, let us live unmasked before God.

Like Melchizedek, let us bless with what we have received.

Here are three questions to ponder in prayer today:

- What does Jesus show me when I let him look inside my “cup” today, and where do I ask for grace to change?
- Which small devotion or habit needs to be re-aimed toward justice, mercy, and faithfulness?
- Where can I be a “little Melchizedek” — offering peace and blessing that rise from a heart conformed to Christ?

Source: <https://sj.mcharlesworth.fr/homilies/2025-08aug-26-yc-ot-21/>

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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.