



## Saturday of the 1st Week in Ordinary Time



**Date:** Saturday, January 18, 2025 | **Season:** Ordinary Time before Easter | **Year:** C

**First Reading:** Hebrews 4:12–16

**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 19:8–10, 15 | **Response:** John 6:63c

**Gospel Acclamation:** Luke 4:18

**Gospel Reading:** Mark 2:13–17

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

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**T**oday's Gospel reveals the heart of Jesus' mission: sitting at table with tax collectors and sinners, he demonstrates the boundless mercy of God. This scene invites deep reflection on how we live our own mission of reconciliation and hope, especially in this Jubilee of Hope called by Pope Francis.

The Pharisees, innocently intent on preserving purity, criticized Jesus for crossing boundaries they believed necessary for holiness. Yet Jesus' response—"I came not to call the righteous, but sinners"—reframes holiness as a mission of restoration. This Jubilee Year reminds us that our vocation is not only to deepen our union with God but also to extend that hope to others, especially those whom society excludes or judges.

The first reading from the letter to the Hebrews reminds us that "the word of God is living and effective." That is to say that the Word is never static; it moves us, it transforms us, and it heals us – or at least it is meant to if we give it the time it deserves in our lives! As religious, we are called to embody this Word, and allow it to become incarnated in us, so that we become instruments of God's living presence. Ignatian Spirituality offers us a wonderful pathway to this: through discernment we can learn to see where God is at work in our world, and to respond generously, meeting people where they are and inviting them to encounter Christ, especially through that wonderful way of praying with Scripture, imaginative contemplation, which helps us to experience the living and effective Word of God in our minds' eye.

Psalm 19 describes God's law as "perfect, refreshing the soul" and "trustworthy, giving wisdom to the simple." This is not a law of rigidity but of freedom—a freedom we experience in the Spiritual Exercises, where we learn to behold all things with indifference, seeking only what leads us closer to God's greater glory.

In this morning's Gospel Acclamation, we heard, "The Lord sent me to bring glad tidings to the poor and to proclaim liberty to captives." This mission echoes our own as religious, especially in this Jubilee year. How do we proclaim hope to those who are poor, whether materially or spiritually? And how can each of us by virtue of our baptism – how can we, or do we accompany others toward the freedom that comes from knowing we are, all of us, beloved by God?

As we gather around the Eucharistic table, let us remember Jesus' own table fellowship with those tax collectors and sinners. His presence among them wasn't just an act of mercy; it was a proclamation of the Kingdom, where no one is beyond the reach of God's grace. May we, like him, cross boundaries, extend hope, and invite everyone, everyone, everyone – as Pope Francis says - to the transforming table of his love. Inspired by Ignatius, let us discern how we are called to bring the light of Christ's mercy to a world longing for hope.

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