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Friday of the 5th Week of Lent

Date: Friday, April 11, 2025 | **Season:** Lent | **Year:** C
First Reading: Jeremiah 20:10–13
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 18:2–7 | **Response:** Psalm 18:7
Gospel Acclamation: John 6:63c, 68c
Gospel Reading: John 10:31–42
Preached at: the Chapel of the Most Holy Name, Kolvenbach House **in the** Archdiocese of Lusaka, Zambia**.**

The world, it seems, is always trying to redefine us. It constantly shifts its weight upon us, hoping to bend us to its will. The clamor of popular opinion and the lures of wealth, power, and prestige seek to strip away the very core of who we are. In our lives, as in the lives of those who have gone before us, we are constantly challenged to ask: **Who am I? And whom do I serve?**

Jeremiah, in today's first reading, stands as the very picture of someone under siege by this kind of pressure. He has proclaimed God's word, but instead of the acceptance he might have hoped for, he is met with mockery, betrayal, and the threat of violence. *"I hear the whisperings of many: 'Terror on every side! Denounce him! Let us denounce him!'"* (Jer 20:10). His own friends turn against him, and those who should have been allies now speak against him. Yet, despite it all, he declares with unshakable conviction, *"But the Lord is with me, like a mighty champion"* (Jer 20:11). In that one powerful declaration, we hear the heart of his courage, his trust, his faith. It is the voice of one who knows, deeply, that God's justice will prevail, that even in the most painful of circumstances, God is the One who champions the cause of the poor and oppressed. And what better time than Lent, the season of purification and sacrifice, to remind ourselves that we are never abandoned in the fight for truth, justice, and mercy.

The Psalmist in today's responsorial echoes this powerful trust in God as our rock, our deliverer. *"The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge"* (Psalm 18:2). These are not just words for a time of ease, but words for the storms of life, when the foundations around us seem to shake. If Jeremiah's confidence is rooted in God's justice, the Psalmist's faith is founded in God's protection. Both figures remind us that in the midst of chaos, we can stand firm because the One we trust is immovable.

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Jesus, too, faces opposition in the Gospel reading, and as He does, He proclaims His identity with clarity and authority. Surrounded by a hostile crowd at the Temple, Jesus is accused of blasphemy for claiming to be *"the Son of God."* Yet, He does not retreat. His words are direct: *"The Father and I are one"* (John 10:30). He draws the ire of the Jewish leaders, who cannot fathom how He can claim such divinity. But Jesus, in His unflinching truth, lays bare the mystery of the unity between Himself and the Father. To see Jesus is to see the Father. To hear His words is to hear the very voice of God. In this declaration, Jesus reveals that He is the culmination of all that the Temple symbolized—the sacred dwelling of God with His people—now made flesh. The ultimate revelation of God's presence is found in the person of Jesus Christ.

This is not just theological speculation. This is the heart of the Gospel: that God has come to us, in our weakness, in our pain, in our struggle, and He is the one who walks with us. Just as God stood with Jeremiah and the Psalmist, so too does He stand with us in the person of Jesus Christ. As we enter more deeply into this season of Lent, we are called to recognize the presence of Christ, not just as an idea, but as a living, breathing reality, present in our hearts and our communities, particularly in the marginalized and the oppressed.

In this context, let us look to St Stanislaus, bishop and martyr, whose feast we observe today. Stanislaus was a bishop in 11th-century Poland who fearlessly spoke out against corruption and injustice—especially when it came from those in power, including the king himself. His prophetic witness came at a great cost: he was martyred during the celebration of the Mass. Like Jeremiah, Stanislaus stood for truth even when surrounded by threats. Like Christ, he bore witness to God's righteousness with courage and clarity, even unto death. His life reminds us that fidelity to God's call is not always welcomed by the world—but it is always rewarded in the Kingdom. Stanislaus reminds us that being a disciple of Christ means being willing to speak the truth in love, even in the face of violence or misunderstanding.

As we journey through Lent, we are reminded that the call to holiness is not one that promises an easy life, but one that asks for everything. To follow Christ means to take up our cross, to embrace the truth, even when it is hard, and to trust in the Lord who is our mighty champion.

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So, as we reflect on these readings, I leave you with three questions that invite us to deeper conversion:

- Where in my life do I experience opposition to God's truth, and how can I respond with the confidence and courage of Jeremiah, knowing that God is my champion?
- In what ways can I recognize and respond to the presence of Christ in the poor and marginalized around me, reflecting the love and justice He calls us to?
- Like Saint Stanislaus, how can I embrace the call to courageous and prophetic witness, even when it leads to personal sacrifice, trusting that Christ is my refuge and my reward?

Let us walk this Lent not just as a time of sacrifice, but as a time of transformation and conversion—becoming ever more aligned with the heart of Christ. May His peace and strength be our guide.

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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.