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Thursday of the 2nd Week of Easter

Date: Thursday, May 1, 2025 | **Season:** Easter | **Year:** C
First Reading: Acts 5:27–33
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 34:2, 9, 17–20 | **Response:** Psalm 34:7a
Gospel Acclamation: Psalm 68:20 (Proper)
Gospel Reading: Matthew 13:54–58 (Proper)
Preached at: the Chapel of the Most Holy Name, Kolvenbach House **in the** Archdiocese of Lusaka, Zambia**.**

There is a moment in history when the truth can no longer be silenced, when those who bear witness to it stand before the powers of the world with courage that shakes the very foundations of authority. The apostles, simple men from Galilee, now transformed by the fire of Pentecost, stand before the Sanhedrin. They are accused, threatened, commanded to keep silent about this Jesus of Nazareth. And Peter, with the boldness of one who has seen the Risen Lord, declares, “We must obey God rather than men.”

These words are not spoken in defiance but in fidelity. They are not words of rebellion but of radical obedience—obedience to the One whose voice speaks in the depths of conscience, whose law is written upon the human heart. This is the Easter proclamation in its purest form: that Jesus Christ is risen, and his victory over sin and death is not a private matter, not a secret to be contained, but a truth that demands to be proclaimed from the rooftops. And because it is proclaimed, it will be opposed.

But Peter and the apostles do not flinch. They have stood in the presence of the Risen Christ. What, now, can the threats of the world do to them? What power can the Sanhedrin wield against men who have already died and been reborn in Christ? This is the courage of Easter, the courage of those who know that even death is not the end of the story.

The psalmist captures this truth with haunting beauty: “The Lord hears the cry of the poor.” Not the powerful, not the comfortable, not the satisfied—but the poor, the afflicted, the brokenhearted. The psalm reminds us that suffering is not hid-

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den from God's sight. That those who are cast down are not abandoned. That the God of Israel is not a distant deity but one who bends low to lift up the oppressed.

And yet, the Gospel presents us with a different kind of rejection. Jesus returns to his hometown, and instead of welcome, he encounters skepticism. "Is this not the carpenter's son?" they murmur. They cannot see beyond what they think they know. They have reduced him to the familiar, the ordinary. And so, in their blindness, they close the door to the extraordinary, to the miraculous.

This moment in Matthew's Gospel is an echo of what the apostles experience in Acts: the rejection of truth when it becomes too uncomfortable. It is one thing to admire Jesus from a distance. It is another to let him disrupt our assumptions, to let him call us beyond what is familiar and safe. The people of Nazareth could not accept that God might be working through someone they thought they understood. And so, their lack of faith stifled what might have been. It is a warning to us all—how often do we resist God's work because it does not fit our expectations? How often do we fail to see the extraordinary grace hidden within the ordinary?

On this feast of St. Joseph the Worker, we are reminded that Jesus himself was known as the carpenter's son. That the hands which would break the bread of life once held a carpenter's tools. And in that simple, honest labour, there was dignity, holiness, the presence of God. This feast, established by Pope Pius XII, sought to reclaim the dignity of labour, to remind the world that work is not merely toil, but participation in God's creative act. In a world where so many are denied fair wages, where labour is too often exploited, where human beings are treated as mere economic instruments, this teaching remains urgent. In Zambia and across the world, where many struggle for just wages and dignified work, St. Joseph stands as a silent witness, calling us to uphold the dignity of every worker, to recognize in each act of honest labour a reflection of the divine.

And so, we are left with a choice. Do we, like the apostles, stand firm in the face of opposition, trusting that God's truth is greater than human threats? Do we, like the psalmist, cling to the hope that God hears the cry of the afflicted? Or do we, like the people of Nazareth, allow our skepticism, our preconceived notions, to close our hearts to the power of Christ in our midst?

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The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius invite us to place ourselves in these stories, to feel their weight in our own lives. So let us take a moment to stand in that courtroom with Peter. Let us feel the heat of the Sanhedrin's scrutiny, the temptation to remain silent. Let us walk the streets of Nazareth, hearing the murmurs of doubt, recognizing where we, too, have struggled to believe that God is at work in the ordinary. And let us, like St. Joseph, embrace the quiet, steadfast labour of building the Kingdom of God in our own lives.

As we leave here today, I invite you to reflect on these questions:

- Where in my life is God calling me to speak truth, even when it is difficult? Do I have the courage of Peter to say, "We must obey God rather than men"?
- Have I overlooked the presence of God in the ordinary? Where might Christ be moving in the simple, unnoticed moments of my daily life?
- How can I uphold the dignity of work and stand in solidarity with those who are denied just wages and conditions, both in my community and beyond?

May we, like the apostles, be bold in our witness. May we, like the psalmist, trust in the faithfulness of God. And may we, like St. Joseph, find holiness in the work set before us. Amen.

Prayer for the Cardinals preparing for Conclave

God of wisdom and grace,
you never cease to call your Church forward.

As the College of Cardinals gathers to discern and elect a new pope,
grant them inner freedom—free from fear, ambition, and division—
that they may be truly available to your Spirit.

Give them listening hearts,
attentive to the cries of the world and the needs of your Church.
Help them to listen to your Holy Spirit, whom you send to guide them,
that they may recognize your desire and faithfully follow your will.

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Unite us all in prayer,
that this moment may be one of deep communion,
true discernment, and renewed hope for your Church.

With Mary, Mother of the Church, we entrust this time to you,
through Christ our Lord.
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.