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Friday of the 2nd Week of Easter

Date: Friday, May 2, 2025 | **Season:** Easter | **Year:** C
First Reading: Acts 5:34–42
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 27:1, 4, 13–14 | **Response:** Psalm 27:4a–c
Gospel Acclamation: Matthew 4:4b
Gospel Reading: John 6:1–15
Preached at: the Chapel of the Most Holy Name, Kolvenbach House **in the** Archdiocese of Lusaka, Zambia**.**

There are moments in history when a single voice speaks with clarity, cutting through the noise of fear and uncertainty. One such voice was that of Gamaliel, a wise and measured leader of the Sanhedrin. As the apostles stood accused, bruised yet unbowed, his words rang out like a beacon of reason in a storm of rage: *If this enterprise, this movement of theirs, is of human origin it will break up of its own accord; but if it does in fact come from God you will not only be unable to destroy them, but you might find yourselves fighting against God.*

How often do we, in our own lives, try to resist what God is doing simply because it unsettles us? How often do we mistake the unfamiliar for the unholy? The story of Acts is the story of a Church that should not have survived by any human measure—persecuted, outnumbered, dismissed. And yet, here we are. We are proof that this is *from God.*

And yet, the question remains: do we recognize the signs of God's work in our own time? This morning's Gospel presents us with a sign so astonishing that it should have silenced all doubt: five thousand fed from five loaves and two fish. But what happens? The people misunderstand. They see Jesus as a king who will fill their stomachs but not necessarily their souls. They want him to be their provider, but not necessarily their teacher. And so, Jesus withdraws from them. He refuses to be reduced to a mere miracle worker. Because he is something far greater.

This moment, as John tells it, is no ordinary meal. It is Passover. The air is thick with remembrance—of Moses, of manna in the wilderness, of deliverance. And Jesus stands in their midst as the fulfillment of all those promises. He does not

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simply distribute bread; he gives *himself*. John makes this clear in the details: Jesus himself distributes the bread, just as he will at the Last Supper, just as he does in every Eucharist. The multiplication is not just about abundance; it is about revelation. And yet, the people fail to see.

Which brings us to the Psalm: *The Lord is my light and my help; whom shall I fear?* This is a psalm of trust, but not a naïve trust. It is a trust forged in difficulty. It is the trust of a people who have seen the darkness but know that it will not last. The psalmist longs to dwell in the house of the Lord, to gaze upon his beauty. This longing is the key. For faith is not merely about seeing miracles—it is about seeing *God* in the midst of them.

And what of us? What do we see? Do we recognize the presence of Christ in our world, in our Eucharist, in the breaking of bread with the hungry and the poor? Zambia, like so many places, knows the agony of scarcity—the struggle for daily bread, for dignity, for justice. And yet, what does today's Gospel tell us? That in the hands of Christ, what seems inadequate can become abundance. That our mission is not to send people away but to feed them with whatever we have. *Give them something to eat yourselves,* Jesus tells us in another account of this miracle. In the face of economic hardship, in the face of injustice, in the face of suffering, the Church cannot be a bystander. It must be the hands that distribute, the voice that proclaims, the heart that sees.

Saint Athanasius, whose feast we celebrate this morning, understood this profoundly. He was a man of unshakable conviction. He stood almost alone against the Arian heresy, exiled multiple times for refusing to bend to the political pressures of his day. And yet, he did not yield, because he knew the truth: that Christ was not merely a great prophet, not merely an anointed king, but *God incarnate*. His life was a battle against the temptation to dilute the radical message of the Gospel. And is that not our struggle too? To resist the temptation to make Jesus into something safe, something comfortable, something merely *useful*?

And so, we return to Gamaliel's warning: *If this is from God, you will not be able to overthrow it.* The question before us is simple: Do we stand with God's work, or do we resist it? Do we see the signs, or do we look away? Do we trust in scarcity, or do we believe in the abundance of God's grace?

And so, I leave you with three questions for your prayer and reflection in this Easter season:

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- Where in my life do I need to trust in God's abundance rather than my own scarcity?
- How is Christ calling me to recognize him in the breaking of bread—not just at the altar, but in the lives of the poor, the suffering, and the forgotten?
- When I hear the wisdom of Gamaliel—*If this is from God, you will not be able to overthrow it*—how do I respond? Am I willing to stand with Christ, even when the world misunderstands him?

Let us not be among those who fail to recognize the signs. Let us see, and believe. 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.

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.

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