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Monday of the 3rd Week of Easter

Date: Monday, May 5, 2025 | **Season:** Easter | **Year:** C
First Reading: Acts 6:8–15
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 119:23–24, 26–27, 29–30 | **Response:** Psalm 119:1ab
Gospel Acclamation: Matthew 4:4b
Gospel Reading: John 6:22–29
Preached at: the Chapel of the Most Holy Name, Kolvenbach House **in the** Archdiocese of Lusaka, Zambia**.**

To use Johannine language, both readings today tell us that what is "from above" clashes with what is "from below." In Acts, Stephen stands before his opponents with irrefutable wisdom, his face radiant "like the face of an angel." His accusers, clinging to what is perishable, what is fragile, what is ultimately of this world, have no answer to the power of the Spirit speaking through him. In the Gospel, Jesus meets a crowd chasing after him across the lake—not for the mystery of who he is, but for the miracle of what he has given them. They do not see him; they see their own hunger, their own desires, their own needs. "You are looking for me not because you saw signs," he says, "but because you ate the loaves and were filled."

It is an ancient temptation, older than Stephen, older than the crowd at Capernaum. It is the temptation to make God small enough to serve our own interests. To confine him to the limits of what we understand, what we expect, what we demand. The people seek Jesus, but they do not yet believe. They ask him, "What must we do to perform the works of God?" And Jesus answers simply, "This is the work of God: that you believe in the one he has sent."

It is a powerful moment—a moment that reveals that belief is not an intellectual exercise but a surrender, not a conclusion but a beginning. Belief means allowing ourselves to be caught up in the work of God, to let his will shape our days, our priorities, our vision. It is the difference between seeing Jesus as a provider of bread and seeing him as the Bread of Life. It is the difference between seeking security in what passes away and anchoring our lives in what is eternal. Stephen understood this. And because he understood it, he spoke. He preached. He stood unshaken before those who could take his life but not his faith.

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Here, in this Easter season, we are called to the same surrender. The Resurrection is not merely an event we commemorate; it is a reality we are invited to live. It demands that we reorient our lives, that we learn to hunger not for what perishes but for what endures. And that reorientation has consequences. It means defending the dignity of those who are cast aside. It means standing for justice even when the cost is great. It means speaking truth when it is easier to remain silent. It means seeing Christ in the poor, in the persecuted, in those whose voices are ignored. It means learning, as Stephen did, that the wisdom from above is not always welcome in a world that clings so desperately to what is below.

There are moments when faithfulness will make us stand apart. There are moments when we will find ourselves, like Stephen, misunderstood, misrepresented, even opposed. The question is not whether we will face these moments, but whether we will meet them with the courage of those who believe, truly believe, in the one whom God has sent.

In Zambia, in our time, we see so many grasping for what is below—security, power, control, survival. And yet, as the economy strains and people struggle, the Church is called to be a sign of what is above. We are called to be a people of resurrection hope, to witness not only with our words but with our lives. The poor, the marginalized, the forgotten—they do not need bread alone, but the truth that they are seen, that they are loved, that their dignity is not up for debate. And it is our faith that must make that truth known.

And so, as we stand in the light of Easter, the question Christ asked then is the question he asks now: What do you seek? Not what do you need. Not what do you want. What do you seek? And when you find it, when you finally see him, when you finally believe, what will you do?

Will you follow Stephen's example, allowing the Spirit to shine through you? Will you hunger for the bread that endures? Will you let your belief shape your life, your choices, your commitments?

As we continue this journey through Easter, let us take time for deep reflection:

- Where in my life am I clinging to what is perishable instead of what is eternal?

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- How is God inviting me to bear witness to the Gospel, even in the face of resistance?
- In what ways can I be a sign of the resurrection in my community this week?

Let us pray for the grace to seek what is above, to believe in the One whom God has sent, and to let that belief shape everything we are and everything we do.

Let us pray together:

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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