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Tuesday of the 4th Week of Easter

Date: Tuesday, May 13, 2025 | **Season:** Easter | **Year:** C
First Reading: Acts 11:19–26
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 87:1b–7 | **Response:** Psalm 117:1a
Gospel Acclamation: John 10:27
Gospel Reading: John 10:22–30
Preached at: the Chapel of the Most Holy Name, Kolvenbach House **in the** Archdiocese of Lusaka, Zambia**.**

In today's First Reading from the Acts of the Apostles, we find ourselves standing at a pivotal moment in the early Church's journey. The followers of Christ are scattered by the storm of persecution, yet in their scattering, they carry the Gospel to new lands, bringing the message of hope, of salvation, of the Resurrection to places far and wide. "The Lord helped them," we are told, "and a great number believed and were converted to the Lord." This movement from persecution to evangelization is not merely a historical event; it is a profound statement about the resilience of the Christian faith. Persecution, instead of silencing the voice of the Church, spreads it farther than it had ever gone before.

What strikes me in this passage is not just the persecution itself, but the way in which God's plan unfolds. It is not the strength or strategy of human hands that propels the Church forward—it is God's hand at work, even if not named explicitly in this translation. The growth of the Church is shown not as a human achievement, but as a divine reality. Barnabas, a man of faith and encouragement, sees the grace of God at work in the community in Antioch, and he rejoices. The Church's mission is rooted in this divine grace, which continues to draw people to the truth of Jesus's love and mercy. This divine action, God's hand moving through human history, continues to guide the Church today, especially in times of trial.

As we listen to the Gospel, we hear the voice of Jesus declaring, "No one will ever steal them from me," and further, "No one can steal from the Father." This is an astonishing affirmation of security. Though the translation we heard today doesn't use the word "hand," many other versions bring out a vivid image behind Jesus' words: "No one will snatch them out of my hand… No one can

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snatch them out of the Father's hand." It's a powerful way of expressing the security that Christ offers—one hand that cannot be moved, one hand that cannot be shaken: the hand of God, holding us securely in love.

Just as the early Christians were scattered by persecution and yet held firm in God's grace, so too are we called to trust that, no matter what comes our way, we are held—securely, tenderly—in God's unwavering love.

This brings us to the theme of today's Psalm, which celebrates the city of God, the holy place of refuge. The Psalmist sings, "Glorious things are spoken of you, O city of God," echoing the promise of security that God offers to those who seek refuge in His presence. The city of God is not just a physical place, but a spiritual home—an eternal sanctuary where God's love reigns supreme, where justice is upheld, and where the poor and marginalized find solace. This is the city that we, as Christians, are called to build today, a city founded on the rock of Jesus's love and compassion, a city where all people, regardless of their background or station in life, find dignity and peace.

In Zambia, where the struggle for justice and peace is very real, these readings call us to reflect on the role we must play in building such a city. In a land that has known much suffering, both through political disappointment and economic hardship, we are invited to stand with the poor, the displaced, and the oppressed. The migration of the early Christians, fleeing persecution and yet continuing to spread the Gospel, can be a metaphor for the journey that so many refugees and migrants face today. The struggles of displaced peoples, whether they are fleeing violence, poverty, or climate change, are part of our global context—one that calls for our Christian response, rooted in the Gospel's call to welcome the stranger, to care for the outcast, and to work for a world where the dignity of every human person is upheld.

When we consider the feast of Our Lady of Fatima, which we celebrate today, we are reminded of the power of prayer, the importance of intercession, and the call to a life of justice and peace. Our Lady of Fatima appeared to three young children in Portugal in 1917, calling them—and us—to pray for peace and to trust in God's mercy. Her message resonates deeply with the readings of today. She urged us to turn to God in times of suffering, to pray for the world, and to

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seek peace in the face of adversity. Just as the early Christians found refuge in God's hand amidst persecution, so too does Our Lady of Fatima remind us that, even in the darkest of times, God's grace and mercy are sufficient.

Let us reflect, then, on the question that echoes throughout today's readings: Are we willing to place ourselves in God's hand, trusting that we are held secure in His love? The early Christians, scattered by persecution, found strength in God's grace. We, too, are called to trust in God's hand in our lives as we face the trials of our world. Are we willing to follow the example of Barnabas, who rejoiced when he saw God's work in the lives of others, even when it meant going into unfamiliar, uncharted territory?

As we enter the rest of this Easter season, let us allow the message of these readings to challenge us. We are called to be bearers of hope and justice in our own world, to welcome the marginalized and the displaced, to work for a society where the dignity of the human person is upheld. May we, like the early Christians, be willing to let the Spirit lead us, knowing that we are held in God's unshakable love. May we, like Barnabas, rejoice in the work of God's grace, even when it leads us to places and people we may not expect.

As we move forward in the week ahead, let us reflect on these questions:

- How can I, in my daily life, be a bearer of God's grace and hope to those around me?
- In what areas of my life do I need to trust more fully in God's hand, knowing that He holds me securely?
- How can I stand in solidarity with the poor, the displaced, and the marginalized in my community, and what practical steps can I take to serve them with compassion?

May the Resurrection of Christ give us the courage and the strength to live out the Gospel with joy and conviction, trusting in the unshakable love of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

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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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