Fr Matthew Charlesworth, SJ
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6th Sunday of Easter

Date: Sunday, May 25, 2025 | **Season:** Easter | **Year:** C
First Reading: Acts 15:1–2, 22–29
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 67:2–3, 5–6, 8 | **Response:** Psalm 67:4
Second Reading: Revelation 21:10–14, 22–23
Gospel Acclamation: John 14:23
Gospel Reading: John 14:23–29
Preached at: the Chapel of the Most Holy Name, Kolvenbach House **in the** Archdiocese of Lusaka, Zambia**.**

Have you ever paused at the entrance of a chapel, just before dawn? Behind you, the world begins to stir—demands waking like drums in the dark. Before you, a sanctuary lamp flickers, holding vigil in silence. And in that narrow space between noise and stillness, between what has been and what is yet to come, your soul catches its breath. That threshold moment, delicate and weighty, feels like peace.

But let us not mistake this stillness for the whole story. Peace, as Jesus offers it, is not the peace of quiet corridors or silent monasteries. It is not escape. It is not the reward of comfort or the fruit of distance. No—true peace is often a hard-won harmony, a brave assent to the Spirit's unsettling call, born from a deep and abiding love for God and neighbour. It does not come when the storm passes, but when Someone enters the storm with us – motivated by boundless love.

And that Someone is Jesus Christ.

Today, He speaks of peace—but not as the world gives. His peace is not indifference masquerading as diplomacy. It is not tolerance dressed up as truth. His is the peace of pierced hands offered in love, the peace of a towel wrapped around the waist in humble service and love, the peace of a stone rolled away at dawn to reveal the ultimate act of love. It is a peace steeped in sacrifice, and it is breathed upon us with fire.

"the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, … will teach you everything and remind you of all I have said to you."

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This Spirit does not educate by lecture, but by ignition of love. The Spirit does not whisper only in theory but burns in encounter of loving hearts. This Spirit—our Advocate—is not passive. She defends with fierce love, she disturbs with compassionate love, she dislodges with transformative love. She calls religious not to safety, but to sanctity through love.

And you—my brothers and sisters—have answered her call. You have pledged your lives, your names, your futures to follow where this Spirit leads. You have chosen obedience.

But why?

Why, in a world that deifies autonomy, would anyone willingly surrender their will? Why would anyone choose obedience? Because of love. Not because we are weak. Not because we are naïve. But because we believe in love. Because we trust that the will of God—spoken through the Church, through our superiors, through the whispered prayers of our communities and companions—can shape us into more than we dare to become on our own because it is rooted in perfect love.

Obedience in religious life is not servitude. It is a covenant of love. It is the defiant choice to believe that God can speak through a novice's question, a local superior's caution, or a Provincial's silence because He loved us first and desires our good. It is the humility to accept that fidelity, though it may feel fruitless, is always fertile because it is an act of love.

And yes, obedience costs. But love makes it possible. It may cost a long-dreamed mission. It may cost your comfort, your reputation, even your voice—for a time. But love endures all things. But in that stripping away, something else is born: a freedom no world can counterfeit and no tyrant can touch because it is born of love.

So let us speak plainly: our vows are not burdens. They are beatitudes of love. They are not a rejection of joy—but a radical path into joy through love.

- Poverty untethers us from the illusion that we are made secure by what we own. In a nation where many are owned by what they lack, we proclaim with our lives: God is enough and His love sustains us.

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- Chastity is not the death of desire, but its resurrection in love. It is the re-ordering of love toward eternity, the choosing of a hundred invisible embraces. In a world where bodies are commodified and love is confused with control, we bear witness that to love is to be free in Christ.
- Obedience quiets the ego and opens the ear to the voice of love. It is a bridge—across generations, cultures, charisms. It is the mortar that binds a broken Church in love. In an era of loud leaders and fragile and failing institutions, we kneel and declare: Not my will, but Yours be done because I love You.

To become peace, then, is not to withdraw—it is to wade in with love. It is to be the quiet voice in a shouting match motivated by love, the steady hand in a crisis guided by love, the presence that persists long after applause fades because of love. To become peace is to bear, in our very bodies, the fruit of the Spirit—not just privately, but prophetically as an act of love. It means speaking truth in parish councils with love. It means walking beside trafficked girls and disillusioned boys out of love. It means calling out sin in systems—not with rancour, but with resolve and love.

Here in Zambia, you have borne these burdens out of love. You have laboured without salary, served in missions others forgot, taught in schools with no chalk, healed in clinics with no medicine, prayed in communities torn by grief and tension because of your love for God and His people. Some of you carry the weight of promises misunderstood, charisms sidelined, and missions that feel lost but you persevere in love.

And yet—you remain.
You stay. You love. You obey. You hope.
You are living proof that the Spirit still breathes, still builds, still burns.

So what shall we do this week? How shall we live out our love? Perhaps we can carve out an hour for Eucharistic silence, not just for adoration but for honest listening with God: Where is our community wounded? Where is it alive? Where does love need to be rekindled? Let each companion send an email, make a call, or knock on a door—to reconcile with one we've avoided, to forgive, or to be forgiven as an act of love. Let each apostolate identify one unjust structure, and

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with prayerful courage, begin the work of dismantling it—whether in a policy, a prejudice, or a pattern of indifference motivated by love for those who are oppressed.

Not because these actions are enough—but because the Spirit makes small seeds grow tall.

So let me ask you—ask us:

- Why did I say yes to love? And how is the Spirit deepening that "yes" today in love?
- Where am I being asked not just to speak peace—but to become it, even when it costs because love demands sacrifice?
- How do my vows proclaim not just a different life, but a better world—a world already breaking in through love?

Scripture does not whisper this morning. It calls to love.

- The Acts of the Apostles reminds us: true discernment happens in communion, not in isolation because love unites us.
- The Psalm declares: God's blessing is meant to spill over, never stagnate because love is meant to be shared.
- The Book of Revelation dares us to believe: the New Jerusalem is not far off—it is among us because love is building it.
- And the Gospel sends us—not with fear, but with fire of love.

May we walk from this altar not with mere conviction, but with commission.

Let us pray:

> Spirit of the Living God, fall fresh on your servants. Rekindle our joy in love. Renew our strength through love. Reignite our "yes" to love. Through our poverty, sow justice with love. Through our chastity, speak tenderness in love. Through our obedience, build peace out of love. May we be signs of Your Kingdom—burning, not consumed by love. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Let us proclaim in our hearts and with our lives now and always: Christ is risen. Truly risen. Alleluia.

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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.