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Friday of the 6th Week of Easter

Date: Friday, May 30, 2025 | **Season:** Easter | **Year:** C
First Reading: Acts 18:9–18
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 47:2–7 | **Response:** Psalm 47:8a
Gospel Acclamation: Luke 24:46, 26
Gospel Reading: John 16:20–23
Preached at: the Chapel of the Most Holy Name, Kolvenbach House **in the** Archdiocese of Lusaka, Zambia**.**

This morning, the Word invites us into a holy contradiction: joy laced with tears, peace forged in fire, life birthed through pain. These are not opposites to be solved—they are the paradoxes at the heart of our faith. They echo through the life of Paul, the promises of Jesus, and the praise of the Psalmist, each testifying that joy, hard-won and heaven-sent, is the inheritance of those who walk in the shadow of the Cross and the light of the Resurrection.

We begin with Paul, that tireless traveller of the Gospel, now in Corinth, bruised by rejection yet burning with purpose. He walks into hostility, faces accusations, and finds himself before Gallio, the proconsul—a man unmoved by spiritual quarrels. But before that confrontation, a vision comes in the night: “Do not be afraid. Keep on speaking; do not be silent. For I am with you.” These are not words of comfort alone; they are a commissioning. And so Paul, though threatened, speaks. Though accused, he is protected. The charges crumble, not by political cleverness, but by providence.

Yet here lies the mystery: God promises protection, but not ease. He assures presence, not exemption. Paul still faces trial. The divine shield does not ward off every wound but transforms their meaning. Suffering, once the mark of failure, becomes the signature of fidelity. And joy? It flows not from the absence of affliction, but from the presence of God within it.

Psalm 47 lifts us from Corinth to the cosmos: “God reigns over the nations; God sits on His holy throne.” This is no distant dominion. It is a reign rooted in justice, steeped in mercy, and pulsing with love. In Zambia today, amidst cries for dignity, for employment, for equity, we are tempted to doubt this reign. But the

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Psalmist calls us to see deeper. God's throne is not perched on some faraway cloud—it is embedded in the broken places of the world, where the Kingdom is being born, slowly and stubbornly, through the labours of love and justice.

In the Gospel, Jesus prepares His disciples for the shattering sorrow of His Passion. "You will weep and mourn while the world rejoices," He says. Yet He does not stop at sorrow. He reaches forward to the dawn: "Your grief will turn to joy." And then, the image—so ordinary, so holy: a woman in labour. Agony precedes arrival. Pain gives way to a cry—not of anguish, but of new life. This is not pain denied or diminished. It is pain that has passed through the fire and been changed. This is the pattern of the Gospel. This is Resurrection. This is new life!

This joy, this Resurrection joy, is not a passing pleasure. It is an unshakeable defiance of despair. The world can offer fleeting comforts—wealth without meaning, applause without love, power without peace. But the joy of Christ cannot be stolen. It is eternal. It is ours.

In the Ignatian tradition, we are invited not merely to read this Gospel but to enter it. Sit beside the disciples in that dusky upper room. Feel their fear, their confusion. Hear Jesus speak: "Your sorrow will turn into joy." Let that word land in your own wounded places. Where do you need to hear it? What sorrow still clutches at your spirit?

Today, as parts of the Church mark the feast of St Joan of Arc, we are offered a companion in courage—young, bold, and aflame with divine purpose. A young woman, unlettered but anointed, misunderstood by Church and State, burned by fear and politics. Yet she heard the voice of God and obeyed. She, too, knew the paradox: condemned but not conquered, martyred yet triumphant. She reminds us that faithfulness often walks in fire, but the flames cannot consume the soul rooted in God.

So we do not lose heart. We labour, we love, we live—not in vain, but in victory. Christ is risen. And in His rising, all our sufferings—yours and mine—are caught up, not erased, but transformed. Like seeds buried in soil, our tears become the rain from which joy springs. Joy that no one can take. Joy that builds justice. Joy that sings of eternity.

Let us pause, then, with hearts open to grace, and ask:

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- Where in my life do I avoid facing difficulties, forgetting the promise of Resurrection joy?
- How can I embody Easter joy for those still waiting for justice—in my home, my parish, my city? Perhaps by volunteering at a local charity, advocating for fair wages, or simply offering a listening ear to someone who is struggling?
- When Christ whispers, "Your sorrow will turn into joy," do I believe Him?

May the joy of Easter continue to transform us, deepening our trust in the Resurrection and strengthening our resolve to live the Gospel with courage, compassion, and hope.

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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.