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Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Date: Saturday, June 28, 2025 | **Season:** Ordinary Time after Easter | **Year:** C
First Reading: Genesis 18:1–15
Responsorial Psalm: Luke 1:46–50, 53–55 | **Response:** Luke 1:54b
Gospel Acclamation: Luke 2:19
Gospel Reading: Luke 2:41–51 (Proper)
Preached at: the Chapel of Emmaus House **in the** Archdiocese of Harare, Zimbabwe**.**

My dear friends,

We gather today to celebrate the Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and we do so the day after the Sacred Heart of Jesus. These two hearts—one human, one divine—beat in perfect harmony, guiding us to understand the depth of God's love and the way we are called to share in it.

The Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, celebrated yesterday, called us to behold the love of God poured out for all humanity. It is a love that is boundless, sacrificial, and relentless. Today, as we focus on the Immaculate Heart of Mary, we see this same love mirrored, not just as a reflection of divine grace, but as a love lived in perfect response to the will of God. It is a love that takes form, a love that listens, a love that welcomes and treasures.

Consider, if you will, the story of Abraham and the three guests at Mamre. Abraham, a man of faith, opened his heart to strangers, not knowing that in doing so, he was opening the door to a divine promise. His hospitality, borne from an openness to God's presence, sets the stage for a new beginning, as he and Sarah receive the promise of a son, Isaac. Just as Abraham's heart, moved by God's call, is open to strangers, so too Mary's heart—Immaculate and pure—is always open to the will of God. She welcomes God's plan into her life with a heart unencumbered by fear, filled instead with grace and joy. Her heart, like Abraham's, is hospitable, but it is a hospitality that leads to the salvation of the world.

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In the Psalm, we hear Mary's voice magnifying the Lord, exulting in God's mercy, and proclaiming justice for the oppressed. In her words, "My soul magnifies the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my Savior," we see a woman whose heart is aligned perfectly with God's will. This is the heart we are called to imitate—not just in moments of joy, but in times of suffering, when justice seems far off, and when we feel most vulnerable. Mary teaches us to rejoice, to trust, and to welcome God's plans into our lives, however unexpected they may be.

The Gospel today brings us to the temple in Jerusalem, where a twelve-year-old Jesus is found teaching the elders. Mary, in her search for her Son, is filled with wonder and confusion. Yet, she treasures these things in her heart. What a profound image of the mother who ponders and reflects, who holds the mysteries of God's plan with trust. Her heart does not close in frustration but opens wider, embracing the mystery of her Son's mission.

But what does this mean for us? How does the Immaculate Heart of Mary speak to us today, particularly in a world marked by suffering, injustice, and despair? In the midst of Zimbabwe's struggles—economic hardship, political unrest, and social inequality—Mary's heart stands as a beacon of mercy, justice, and hope. We, too, are called to respond with open hearts, to offer hospitality to the stranger, to act justly, and to love deeply. We are called to stand with the marginalized, to embody the mercy we receive, and to be instruments of justice in a broken world.

In the spirit of Pope Francis, whose call for solidarity with the poor and the oppressed resonates deeply with today's readings, and Pope Leo who is concerned with community and peace, we are reminded that the love of the Immaculate Heart of Mary is not a passive love. It is active, it is demanding, and it is transformative. Just as Mary's heart was open to the mysteries of God's love, so must ours be open to the call to serve, to witness, and to act in the world. Her heart is not just a symbol of maternal affection; it is a model of faith, hope, and charity, teaching us that the road to justice and peace requires a willingness to suffer and to love, even when it seems impossible.

And so, as we reflect on the Immaculate Heart of Mary, we are called not only to honor her love but to emulate it. Just as Saint Irenaeus, whose feast we also celebrate today, defended the faith with courage, and as Saints Peter and Paul—whose feast we anticipate tomorrow—proclaimed the Gospel with boldness, we

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are invited to let the love of Mary's heart transform our own. The courage to speak truth, the resolve to act in justice, and the humility to love as Christ loved are the hallmarks of the heart we are called to mirror.

As we prepare to go forth from this celebration, I invite you to reflect on these questions:

- What areas of my life am I called to open my heart more fully to God's plan, just as Mary opened her heart to the mysteries of her Son's mission?
- How can I embody the love and mercy of Mary's heart in my interactions with others, particularly with those who are most marginalized or suffering?
- What concrete steps can I take this week to bring the mercy and justice of Christ to the world, following the example of Mary, who always pondered and acted in love?

May we go forth with hearts like hers—open, pure, and attuned to God's will—so that we may be instruments of His mercy, His justice, and His love in a world that so desperately needs it.

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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.