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Thursday of the 15th Week in Ordinary Time

Date: Thursday, July 17, 2025 | **Season:** Ordinary Time after Easter | **Year:** C
First Reading: Exodus 3:13–20
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 105:1, 5, 8–9, 24–27 | **Response:** Psalm 105:8a
Gospel Acclamation: Matthew 11:28
Gospel Reading: Matthew 11:28–30
Preached at: the Chapel of Richartz House **in the** Archdiocese of Harare, Zimbabwe.

Dear friends in Christ,

This morning's readings are about burden and deliverance—about the weight we carry, and the God who carries us.

Our first reading, from the Book of Exodus, takes us to the desert, where Moses, a fugitive turned shepherd, stands barefoot before a bush that burns with unearthly fire. It is here that he dares to ask the question that any of us would ask, if summoned to confront an empire: "Who shall I say sent me?" In other words—Who are You? What name do You go by?

The response Moses receives is not a name in the ordinary sense. It is a mystery wrapped in a verb: Ehyeh-Asher-Ehyeh. "I am who I am." Or "I will be who I will be." This is not a god of stone or status, but a God in motion. A God of presence. A God of promise. A God who is not defined by where He sits but by where He acts. And He acts, above all, on behalf of the oppressed.

This divine name—rooted in the Hebrew verb hayah, "to be"—becomes YHWH, the sacred Tetragrammaton, translated "the Lord." And this is no theological abstraction. The Lord is the One who hears the cry of the poor, who remembers His covenant, who raises up prophets and topples tyrants. He is not neutral in the face of injustice. He chooses sides—and He sides with the slave.

Psalm 105, our responsorial psalm today, echoes this faithfulness. "He remembers his covenant forever". That single line is our refrain. Our anchor. This is a God who remembers—not passively, like we remember birthdays or dates—but

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with an active fidelity that reshapes history. “He sent Moses his servant, and Aaron whom he had chosen. He worked marvels in the land of Ham.” The God of Exodus is not a comforting concept. He is a liberating presence.

We need that presence here and now. In 2025, in Zimbabwe, we are no strangers to heavy burdens. The cries of our people are not unfamiliar to God. There are Pharaohs still—Pharaohs of greed, corruption, scarcity, and despair. Pharaohs who issue decrees not with stone tablets, but with fuel queues and broken promises. Pharaohs who reduce people to statistics and children to commodities. Yet even here, especially here, God says: I have seen. I have heard. I will act.

And if we doubt that this God understands burden, then we must turn to the Gospel of Matthew, where Christ speaks with the voice of the same God. “Come to me, all you who labour and are burdened, and I will give you rest.” This is not metaphor. It is mercy. It is Jesus, the new Moses, inviting us not into passivity, but into partnership.

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart.” The yoke is an image familiar to His listeners—used to bind two oxen together for labor. But this yoke is not imposed by force. It is offered in freedom. And it is Christ who takes the heavier end.

Here we see the deep symmetry with Moses—who was described in Numbers 12:3 as the most humble man on earth. Just as Moses was called to carry the burden of his people, so too Christ carries ours. But unlike Pharaoh, who increases the workload, Jesus lightens the load. Not by taking us out of struggle, but by walking within it.

This is the heart of Ignatian spirituality. In the Spiritual Exercises, St. Ignatius invites us to contemplate Christ not just as a distant figure, but as a companion on the road. To stand with Him in Galilee. To feel the weight of His yoke in Gethsemane. To listen to His invitation—gentle, insistent, personal.

And the invitation is not just to rest—it is to mission. Moses is not called to sit in silence. He is sent to speak. Sent to confront Pharaoh. And so are we. To challenge unjust systems. To advocate for the dignity of every Zimbabwean. To remember that the burdens people bear—hunger, displacement, unemployment—are not just “social issues.” They are the cry of God’s people, and they demand a response.

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Perhaps today we feel inadequate. Moses did. “Who am I to go to Pharaoh?” But God does not begin with Moses’ qualifications. He begins with His presence: I will be with you. And in Christ, we discover that presence again—not just near us, but in us. Yoked with us. Working through us.

This is the great hope of the Christian life. That we are never alone. That our burdens, though real, are not final. That the God who revealed His name in a burning bush reveals His heart in a broken body—and still says, Come to me.

So let us take a moment—right here, right now—and place those burdens before Him. Not to be rid of them, but to be transformed by them. For the burden, when shared with Christ, becomes not an obstacle, but a path. Not a weight, but a witness.

And may that path—however hard, however holy—lead us not to despair, but to rest. And through that rest, to renewal. And from that renewal, to justice.

Let us take these questions into our prayer today:

- When I consider the burdens I carry—emotional, spiritual, societal—where might Christ be inviting me to share the yoke with Him?
- Who in my life or in my community is bowed low under the weight of injustice—and how is God asking me to respond?
- In what ways has God already remembered His covenant with me—through moments of consolation, courage, or unexpected strength—and how might I share that memory with others?

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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