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Friday of the 15th Week in Ordinary Time

Date: Friday, July 18, 2025 | **Season:** Ordinary Time after Easter | **Year:** C
First Reading: Exodus 11:10–12
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 116:12–15, 15, 16bc, 17–18 | **Response:** Psalm 116:13
Gospel Acclamation: John 10:27
Gospel Reading: Matthew 12:1–8
Preached at: the Chapel of Richartz House **in the** Archdiocese of Harare, Zimbabwe**.**

Dear brothers in Christ,

The story from Exodus is heavy with finality. Nine plagues have passed. Pharaoh has resisted, relented, and hardened again. But now the tenth is coming. The Lord will act. Not to humiliate Egypt, but to save a people. To begin again. The night of Passover will be remembered forever, not just for what God did, but for how the people were told to remember it—through a meal, through blood, through bread.

It is striking how the ritual enters the story before the event is even over. As if God is saying: "Even in crisis, form memory. Even in fear, pass on hope." The lamb is eaten in haste. The blood is painted on the door. Not out of superstition, but as a sign of trust. Trust that death will pass by. Trust that God is with the poor, the vulnerable, the ones without power or voice. That is the heart of Passover. And it still speaks to us.

We, too, have lived through long nights. In this country, we have seen corruption and collapse. Young people leaving in search of work. Elders struggling to find medicine. Systems that do not serve. But God does not pass by. He passes over with protection, and walks with us in solidarity. As Jesuits, many of us now no longer on the frontlines, we might ask: what does liberation look like for us, in these later chapters of our lives?

The Psalm gives an answer: "How can I repay the Lord for His goodness to me?" The words are simple, but the heart behind them is full. It is the prayer of someone who has been close to death and brought back. "You have loosened my

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bonds," the psalmist says. Not all bonds are physical. Some are inward: fear, confusion, depression, decline. And yet even there, the Lord frees. Even in weakness, there is a song to sing, a chalice to raise, a vow to fulfil.

This week, our community walks tenderly in grief as we commend Bro Lawrence Makonora to the Lord. In recent years, he bore the quiet cross of confusion and desolation. There were days of forgetfulness, of fog, of inner silence. But those who lived alongside him know there was also something deeper still: an abiding faith that illness could not erase, and a kind of fidelity that outlasted clarity.

He did not need to be eloquent to bear witness. He did not need to be strong to be faithful. His presence, even in fragility, was a form of prayer. And now he has crossed the threshold, passed over into the freedom he hoped for. No longer confused. No longer burdened. Known fully. Loved completely.

Like the Israelites on that first Passover night, he was ready—perhaps not in mind, but in heart. His sandals were on. His lamp was lit. His name was already written in the memory of God.

Our Gospel today brings us into a quiet moment with Jesus in a field. His disciples are hungry. They pluck grain. And the Pharisees notice—not their hunger, but their fault. Jesus responds not with anger, but with clarity. He reminds them that even David once ate the bread reserved for priests. That compassion is older than custom. That mercy matters more than rule.

"I desire mercy, not sacrifice." That is not a rejection of the law, but a return to its centre. All our rituals, all our structures, all our formation—at their heart, they must serve love. We know this deeply, after many years in the Society. We know how rules can hold us, but also how sometimes they can bind. And we know how mercy can untie even old knots.

This Gospel is close to Ignatius. His own conversion was not sudden, but shaped by attention. By noticing the movements of the Spirit in real time. We are called to that same discernment. Noticing where law gives life—and where it might be getting in the way. Noticing, too, when hunger is more important than protocol. Jesus is not encouraging chaos. He is restoring focus: the human person, made in God's image, is never to be overlooked in the name of order.

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So today, we return to the centre. God saves through a lamb. We remember through a meal. We worship not by strict rule, but by mercy. Even now, in later life, there is space for freedom. Even now, in these years of less noise and more stillness, there is room to listen—to the God who still passes by, who still stays, who still speaks.

And so, I leave you with three questions, drawn from the spirit of the Exercises, for your prayer this week:

- Where, even now, do I still long for God's liberation in my life?
- In what ways might mercy—toward others or toward myself—need to come before sacrifice?
- And as I look back on my years, how is God inviting me to remember with gratitude, and to offer that memory in service?

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.