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Saturday of the 15th Week in Ordinary Time

Date: Saturday, July 19, 2025 | **Season:** Ordinary Time after Easter | **Year:** C
First Reading: Exodus 12:37–42
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 136:1, 10–15, 23–24 | **Response:** Psalm 136:1b
Gospel Acclamation: Psalm 118:27
Gospel Reading: Matthew 12:14–21
Preached at: the Chapel of Richartz House **in the** Archdiocese of Harare, Zimbabwe**.**

Dear brothers in Christ,

In the stillness of the night, the people of Israel began their journey. They didn't march out proudly—they walked quietly, carrying bread baked in haste and hearts filled with longing. Our first reading from the Book of Exodus tells us it was a night of watching. A night when God Himself kept vigil over His people. And they were told to remember that vigil for all time.

The Hebrew word used here—*shamar*—means to keep watch, to guard, to stay near. It's the kind of attention a parent gives at the bedside of a sick child. It's the kind of patience a shepherd shows with a restless flock. God stayed close. He didn't send angels from afar. He watched, and He walked with them.

What's more, they didn't leave Egypt alone. The reading tells us that a mixed multitude went with them—people not born into the promise, but drawn to it. From the very beginning, God's covenant was never meant to be closed. Mercy reached beyond the camp. It reached to strangers, to outsiders, to all those longing for something more.

And this leads straight to our Psalm today: "His mercy endures forever." We say it again and again—not because we've run out of things to say, but because we've found the one thing that matters most. His mercy endures in every age and every place. In Egypt, in exile, in our own Zimbabwe. That mercy still holds steady through drought and inflation, through political tension and family struggle. Mercy that does not expire. Mercy that watches over the forgotten.

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And in the Gospel from Matthew, we see that mercy made flesh. Jesus is under threat. The Pharisees are already plotting. But He does not respond with shouting or force. He withdraws. He heals quietly. He protects those who are fragile. The prophet Isaiah had said it: “He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smouldering wick.”

Here we see again that word *shamar*—not directly, but in action. Jesus keeps watch over the bruised and the broken. He does not discard them. He does not pass them by. He guards their flame until it can burn again.

This kind of mercy—quiet and attentive—is shown most clearly in the Parable of the Good Samaritan, which we heard last Sunday. A man is left half-dead by the side of the road. The priest and the Levite pass by. But the Samaritan—an outsider—stops. He sees. He is moved. He kneels beside the wounded. He stays. Pope John Paul II once said that this parable shows us, more than any other, how we are to treat every person if we wish to live by God’s commandment of love. And more recently, Pope Leo XIV, in his General Audience of 28 May 2025, reflected that “through this story, Jesus teaches us that eternal life is found through showing compassion.” Compassion, then—not pity or sentiment—but the willingness to draw near to suffering and act—is not an optional virtue. It is the path. It is the test. “Go and do likewise,” Jesus says—not as advice, but as the measure of our discipleship.

And all of this—the Exodus, the Servant in the Gospel, the Good Samaritan—makes full sense when we remember the Paschal Mystery. Jesus did not only heal the broken. He became broken Himself. He did not only stand with the suffering. He suffered. He died. And He rose. The bruised reed was not broken. The smouldering wick was not snuffed out. Through His Cross and Resurrection, Jesus showed that love is stronger than death, and mercy is not just comfort—it is hope.

This is also the rhythm of the Spiritual Exercises. Ignatius invites us to watch with Christ. To see where He has already kept vigil in our lives. To notice who we’ve passed by. To ask in stillness:

> What have I done for Christ? What am I doing for Christ? What ought I do for Christ?

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Today we also remember a quiet disciple—St. Epaphras, mentioned in Colossians (4:12–13). Paul says he “wrestled in prayer” for his community. He didn’t write great letters or draw crowds. But he stayed faithful. He kept watch. He prayed without ceasing. A bruised reed, perhaps, but never discarded. A smouldering wick, yet still glowing with intercession.

So, dear friends, as we return to the quiet of our routines, we are being invited into this same watch. To watch over the broken. To guard what is barely alive. To kneel beside the stranger on the road. To be watchmen of mercy.

It may not look like much from the outside. A kind word. A patient prayer. A small act of care. But in the eyes of the Kingdom, this is where eternal life begins.

Let me leave you with three questions to carry into your prayer today:

- Where in my life do I need to recognise Christ’s quiet watchfulness—even when I feel alone?
- Who around me lies by the roadside—and how can I, like the Samaritan, choose mercy instead of passing by?
- What does it mean for me, at this moment in my life, to keep watch with Christ in His suffering and in His rising?

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.