



Wednesday of the 16th Week in Ordinary Time



Date: Wednesday, July 23, 2025 | **Season:** Ordinary Time after Easter | **Year:** C

First Reading: Exodus 16:1–5, 9–15

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 78:18–19, 23–28 | **Response:** Psalm 78:24b

Gospel Acclamation: The seed is the word of God, Christ is the sower; all who come to him will live for ever.

Gospel Reading: Matthew 13:1–9

Preached at: the Chapel of Richartz House in the Archdiocese of Harare, Zimbabwe.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

The people of Israel were tired. Tired of walking, tired of waiting, tired of hunger. In the first reading from the Book of Exodus (Exodus 16:1–15), they had been set free from slavery in Egypt, but not from the fear that comes when everything familiar is gone. In the wilderness of Sin, their stomachs began to growl, and their memories turned rosy. “Would that we had died by the hand of the Lord in Egypt!” they grumbled (Ex 16:3). They remembered meat and bread—but forgot the chains.

Yet God does not turn away from their complaints. Instead, He answers with care. “I am going to rain bread from heaven for you,” He says (Ex 16:4). And so He does. Each morning, they wake to find something small and white, resting on the ground like dew. They call it manna, which in Hebrew means, What is it? (Ex 16:15). A question wrapped in a gift.

This bread from heaven fed them for forty years (cf. Ex 16:35). It was unexpected, but always enough. And it points to something greater. This manna is a sign of God’s patience, yes—but also a foreshadowing of the true Bread of Life: Jesus in the Eucharist (cf. John 6:31–35). God gave them food for the body in the desert; today, He gives us His very self in the Eucharist—daily bread not only for the journey, but for eternal life.

Psalm 78 picks up this memory. “He rained down manna for them to eat; he gave them bread from heaven” (Ps 78:24). And yet the people still tested God. They doubted. They asked, “Can God spread a table in the wilderness?” (Ps 78:19).

It's a fair question—especially in difficult times. Especially here in Zimbabwe, where many are wondering if there will be enough to eat tomorrow, if jobs will come back, if water will flow again in dry places. But the Psalm reminds us that even in the hardest seasons, God does not stop feeding His people. He may not always give us what we expect, but He always gives what we need.

And then we come to the Gospel. In Matthew 13:1–9, Jesus tells a story. He sits beside the lake—perhaps tired Himself from the crowds—and speaks of a farmer. A sower who goes out to scatter seed. Some seed falls on the path and gets eaten by birds. Some falls on rocky ground and withers. Some falls among thorns and gets choked. But some—some falls on good soil. And it bears fruit—thirty, sixty, even a hundredfold.

It's a familiar parable, but it helps to linger a little longer on what Jesus is saying. First, this is a generous sower. He doesn't only plant where he knows it will grow. He spreads the seed widely—on all types of soil. Which means that God is always speaking, always offering His Word—even to hearts that aren't quite ready. Even to us, when we are distracted, discouraged, or spiritually dry.

But He also tells us about the good soil. This is the heart that “hears the word and understands it” (Matt 13:23). It's not just about listening. It's about allowing the Word to sink in, to take root, and to change us. It's about openness, patience, and daily care. It's about allowing the Word of God to shape how we speak, how we serve, how we see the world around us.

We're not just soil—we are also called to be sowers. The Church doesn't exist to admire the Word but to spread it. In our communities today—in families burdened by poverty, in young people searching for direction, in those losing hope because of broken systems—we are called to plant seeds of compassion and truth. Even if we don't see the harvest right away. Even if the ground looks dry.

Saint Bridget of Sweden, whom we honour today, understood this well. Born into wealth, she gave her life to prayer and to service. Her visions came from deep union with Christ. But her real strength lay in how she used her voice. She called the Church—especially its leaders—to return to holiness and humility. She served the poor. She loved Christ crucified. And she trusted that even in a troubled world, God could bring renewal.

Her life reminds us that holiness isn't far away. It begins with listening. It grows in service. It bears fruit when we allow Christ to plant His Word in us and through us.

So this week, in the spirit of Ignatius, let us try to enter this Gospel with our imagination. Picture the sower. Picture the seed. Picture your own heart. What kind of soil do you find there? What parts are dry or overgrown? And what kind of harvest is God asking you to prepare?

Let us end with three questions to guide our prayer today:

- Where have I experienced God feeding me—maybe in ways I didn't recognise at first?
- What is one stone or thorn in my life that I need to clear away so that God's Word can grow deeper?
- How can I be a sower this week—spreading love, truth, or kindness in a world that badly needs all three?

Amen.

Source: <https://sj.mcharlesworth.fr/homilies/2025-07jul-23-yc-ot-16/>

This homily is shared for personal and pastoral use. Please attribute the author and do not alter the meaning when quoting. If you wish this homily to be translated - there is an option on the website which will allow you to translate it into the language of your choice.

Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0) license.

The author does not speak for the Society of Jesus or for the Catholic Church.



Homilies from
Fr Matthew Charlesworth, S.J.
WhatsApp channel



Receive updates on:
WhatsApp | Telegram | Signal

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.