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Thursday of the 16th Week in Ordinary Time

Date: Thursday, July 24, 2025 | **Season:** Ordinary Time after Easter | **Year:** C
First Reading: Exodus 19:1–2, 9–11, 16–20b
Responsorial Psalm: Daniel 3:52–56 | **Response:** Daniel 3:52b
Gospel Acclamation: Matthew 11:25
Gospel Reading: Matthew 13:10–17
Preached at: the Chapel of Richartz House **in the** Archdiocese of Harare, Zimbabwe.

Dear brothers in Christ,

We return today to the foot of Mount Sinai—a place filled with cloud, fire, and trembling. It's not an easy scene. God does not arrive gently. There is thunder, smoke, and a voice that shakes the earth. And yet, this is not about fear. It is about closeness. God is coming down to be near His people. But they must be ready.

The Israelites have just come out of Egypt. They are no longer slaves. But freedom needs preparation. They are told to wash, to wait, to set boundaries. Not because God is fussy, but because hearts take time to notice holy things. Holiness isn't loud. But it is deep. And it asks for attention.

The people say, quickly, "We will do all the Lord has said." It sounds good. But it's too easy. They do not yet know their own hearts. And before long, they will forget this promise. That is often how it is. We mean well, but we grow tired. We make promises, but we lose focus.

Jesus speaks of this in the Gospel. The disciples ask, "Why do you speak in parables?" Why not be clearer? Why not just say things plainly? And Jesus answers with great care: because not everyone is really listening. Some hear, but they don't take it in. Some see, but they don't really notice. The words go in one ear and out the other.

This, too, is something we know. Not just "out there" in the world, but in us. After many years of service, after a life of prayer, our ears can still close. Our hearts can still grow dull—not because we turn away, but because we slowly grow tired. Even good men forget to listen deeply.

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But then we hear the psalm today, from the Book of Daniel. It is not a shout from a mountaintop. It is a song from a furnace. “Blessed are you, O Lord… to be praised and exalted above all forever.” These are words spoken in fire, not fear. It is a quiet kind of praise—steady, faithful, not full of noise, but full of trust.

And perhaps that is the invitation for us today. Not to climb mountains. Not to face furnaces. But to keep listening. To keep singing. To keep turning our hearts towards God, even in this slower, quieter part of life.

Here in Zimbabwe, many people are walking through their own kind of wilderness. Families face hardship. Young people are searching for hope. Many are praying for change. And we, even in old age, frailty and infirmity, have something to give: our prayers, our faith, our watchful hearts. Our role is hidden, but it matters deeply. We help carry the Church by praying for it.

And when we suffer—through weakness, pain, or loss—we are not left empty-handed. Even our aches and limitations can be offered, united with Christ’s own suffering. In this way, we continue to love the Church, not through action but through offering. Nothing is wasted when it is given to Him.

Jesus’ parables are not just stories. They are windows. Invitations. And the Spiritual Exercises have taught us to step into these stories, to ask: where am I in this scene? Am I truly listening? Or have I stopped noticing? Is my heart still open?

Saint Sharbel, whose feast we celebrate today, lived in great silence. He was hidden from the world. But his heart was wide awake. People came to him for healing, not because of what he said, but because of the way he prayed. He reminds us that holiness is not noise. It is quiet love. It is presence. It is prayer.

So today, the Lord is asking us—not to do more, but to be ready again. To listen again. To notice His voice in the silence. The God of Sinai still speaks, even here, even now, in this place of prayer and peace.

Let us take a moment and ask ourselves:

– Where has my heart grown tired or closed, and where might God be inviting me to listen again? – How can I prepare myself, even now, for a deeper meeting with God? – In this quiet season of life, how can I offer my suffering with

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Christ, and love the Church through prayer and presence?

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.