



17th Sunday in Ordinary Time



Date: Sunday, July 27, 2025 | **Season:** Ordinary Time after Easter | **Year:** C

First Reading: Genesis 18:20–32

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 138:1–3, 6–8 | **Response:** Psalm 138:3a

Second Reading: Colossians 2:12–14

Gospel Acclamation: Romans 8:15bc

Gospel Reading: Luke 11:1–13

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

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Given that today is July 27, 2025, the 5th World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly, established by Pope Francis, we are especially called to reflect on the theme chosen by Pope Leo XIV: “Blessed are those who have not lost hope” (cf. Sirach 14:2). This theme, drawn from the Wisdom tradition, reminds us that the righteous are marked not merely by moral integrity but by quiet endurance. In Sirach, to be blessed is not to be untouched by sorrow but to remain turned toward God even when all else turns away. It’s a beatitude for those whose bones remember both famine and feast, whose hands have raised both children and chalices, and who still whisper prayers when others have gone silent. Our elders are not just survivors of time—they are stewards of hope.

In Genesis 18:20–32, we meet Abraham—bold, tender, persistent—as he stands in conversation with God. He pleads not for himself but for a city in danger: “Will you sweep away the innocent with the guilty?” (Gen 18:23). He bargains down from fifty to ten—not from arrogance, but from mercy rooted in justice. And lest we misunderstand the nature of Sodom’s guilt, the prophet Ezekiel tells us plainly: “This was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy...” (Ezek. 16:49–50). Abraham does not stand back and judge; he steps forward and bargains. He dares to believe that justice and mercy can meet. He

does not throw stones—he throws himself between wrath and ruin. He does not excuse evil—but he searches for goodness with relentless tenderness. He becomes what the Church must be: a conscience for the city.

Psalm 138 is our response: “On the day I called, you answered me; you increased the strength of my soul.” David’s voice is not private but prophetic. He reminds us that God does not ignore the lowly. In Zimbabwe, where economic hardship tightens its grip like a dry season without rain, this psalm could be the voice of a grandmother praying beside her mealie-meal pot: “You increased the strength of my soul.” Not my savings. Not my reputation. My soul. That is what endures.

Paul, in Colossians 2:12–14, reminds us that baptism is not a private rite but a radical dying and rising with Christ. Our sins nailed to the cross, we are made new. This grace isn’t earned; it is received. But not received to be stored away. We are not saved to sit still. The cross frees us not only from sin but for service. In baptism, we rise with Christ not only to worship but to work—to feed, to free, to forgive. This is the faith of the elder who still visits the sick, still prays the rosary for peace, still speaks truth even when their voice trembles.

In Luke 11, the disciples ask, “Lord, teach us to pray.” They do not ask for a script but for a shape. And Jesus responds not with a formula but with a formation. Prayer, he shows us, isn’t about impressing God but being honest with Him. Not about having the right words, but an open heart. Not control, but closeness. Prayer, at its heart, is not about changing God’s mind but allowing God to change ours.

That is why Jesus says, “Ask and you will receive” only after offering the Our Father. He first teaches us how to ask. The Our Father begins not with our desires, but with God’s name, God’s kingdom, God’s will. Only then do we say, “give us,” “forgive us,” “lead us,” “deliver us.”

This is the order of Christian prayer: God first, then ourselves. Prayer teaches us to seek what God gives, not just what we want. It draws us back to dependence, to childlike trust. As Jesus said, “Unless you become like little children, you will never enter the Kingdom.”

“Give us each day our daily bread,” Luke writes. It recalls the manna in the wilderness—sufficient for each day, but no more. When the Israelites tried to store it up, it turned to rot. We too must trust God for daily grace—not stockpiled security, but enough for today. Many of us don’t fear hunger of the body, but we dread the hunger of not being in control. We pile up savings, schedules, insurances—but forget the manna. That it came one day at a time. That it spoiled when hoarded. That it tasted like trust.

Prayer isn’t deal-making. It is surrender. Like Abraham, we stand in the gap. Like David, we trust in mercy. And like the persistent neighbour in Jesus’ parable, we keep knocking—not because God needs convincing, but because we do. Persistence in prayer makes space for our hearts to be reshaped.

Throughout these readings, a single flame lights our way: the power of persistent, intercessory prayer. Abraham stands between ruin and hope. David sings of divine attention. Paul proclaims the freedom of the forgiven. Jesus teaches a prayer that transforms.

Now imagine Zimbabwe—families in poverty, youths without work, elders left behind. But do not stop there. Hear the cries from Gaza, where famine now walks alongside war. See the shattered cities of Ukraine. Witness the fleeing crowds and starvation in Sudan. Different names, same cries. Children caught between bullets and borders. Elders forgotten as aid dries up. Not for lack of food, but lack of will. Not from God’s silence—but from our sluggishness. In these places, prayer must be protest. Silence must become solidarity.

Our response must be prayer, yes—but prayer that moves us. Candles lit in silence must become bread shared in kitchens and aid effectively delivered. Petitions must become policies. Peace must be prayed for and pursued. As Abraham stepped out from his tent to intercede, so must we step into the world’s ache with open hearts and willing hands.

Ignatian spirituality invites us into this story. Stand beside Abraham, pleading. Kneel with David, giving thanks. Walk with Paul, forgiven and free. Sit with Jesus, learning not just what to say but how to be. Trust like a child. Ask with hope. Forgive freely. Let yourself be changed.

And so we return to our image: the open door. Abraham's tent flung wide to strangers. David's heart cracked open in song. Paul's prison turned sanctuary by grace. Jesus, knocking still. And the elderly—in whose homes we've always found an open seat, a warm plate, a word of wisdom. When they are honoured, the door remains open—between generations, between heaven and earth.

I leave you with these questions for prayer and action:

- When I pray “Give us today our daily bread,” whose daily bread am I being called to share?
- Where am I being invited to stand in the gap, like Abraham, for the sake of others?
- What attitudes in prayer—trust, surrender, mercy, persistence—need to grow in me this week?

May our prayers be bold.

May our actions be brave.

May the open door of Christ's mercy lead us ever deeper into justice, compassion, and peace.

Amen.

Source: <https://sj.mcharlesworth.fr/homilies/2025-07jul-27-yc-ot-17/>

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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.

