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Memorial of St Alphonsus Liguori, bishop and doctor of the Church

Date: Friday, August 1, 2025 | **Season:** Ordinary Time after Easter | **Year:** C
First Reading: Leviticus 23:1, 4–11, 15–16, 27, 34b–37
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 81:3–6, 10–11b | **Response:** Psalm 81:2a
Gospel Acclamation: 1 Peter 1:25
Gospel Reading: Matthew 13:54–58
Preached at: the Chapel of Richartz House **in the** Archdiocese of Harare, Zimbabwe**.**

Dear brothers in Christ,

We are a people who remember—not just with our minds, but with our whole lives. In today's reading from Leviticus, we hear of the festivals God gave His people—not just rules, but rhythms. Sacred days that helped them remember who they were, where they came from, and who their God is.

Passover recalled the night of freedom. Pentecost gave thanks for the harvest. The Day of Atonement offered mercy. The Feast of Booths reminded them: God walked with them—even in the wilderness.

These were more than memories. They pointed ahead. Christ fulfils them all. He is our true Passover Lamb. His cross is our Day of Atonement. And in the Eucharist, our Feast of Booths, we meet the God who still dwells with His people—not in grandeur, but in the quiet gift of bread.

So what do our feasts teach us today? What does the Lord's Day say to us now? Sunday isn't just routine—it's a weekly trumpet that says, Christ is risen. God is with us. And the altar we gather around is not an escape from life—it is a return to its deepest meaning.

The psalmist tells us: "Blow the trumpet at the new moon." A call to remember. A call to wake up. The Church's calendar still sounds that trumpet—through fasts and feasts, solemnities and silence. It invites us again and again to enter the mystery of Christ.

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“I am the Lord your God… Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it.” God is ready to speak. The danger is not that He’s silent—but that we’ve stopped listening.

Having heard the call to attention, we turn now to a place where attention was tragically lacking: Nazareth.

Jesus returns home and teaches in the synagogue. They’re amazed—but they don’t believe. “Isn’t this the carpenter’s son?” they ask. And they take offence.

Mark’s Gospel puts it more strongly: they were scandalised by Him. As Pope Francis said, the scandal was Jesus’ closeness. His humanity. He was too familiar. Too ordinary. They couldn’t recognise God in someone they thought they already understood.

And so He did not do many deeds of power there—not because He lacked power, but because they lacked faith. Saint John Paul II once said: when people resist with pride and unbelief, Jesus does not admit them to the benefits of His divine power. Grace is offered, but never forced. Miracles wait outside closed hearts.

What about us? After so many years of priesthood and prayer, can we still be surprised by Christ? Do we still expect Him to act—even here, even now?

Saint Alphonsus Liguori did. He gave up privilege to preach to the poor. He believed prayer was not something to perform or perfect, but a daily turning toward the God who never stops turning toward us. “He who prays is certainly saved,” he said—because prayer keeps us close to the One who saves.

He told confessors to be gentle. He believed mercy is stronger than judgement. He is the patron of confessors and moral theologians for that very reason—because he never forgot that the law of God is fulfilled in love.

He spent long hours before the Blessed Sacrament—quiet, faithful, watchful. He believed Jesus was truly there. Not far off, but near. Not loud, but still. Not grand, but hidden—in the tabernacle, in the poor, in the priest who prays.

And so today’s Gospel is not just a story—it is a question.

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Can I still be surprised by Christ? Can I hear His voice in the ordinary? Can I receive Him not as someone I've figured out—but as someone who still has more to give?

The readings today say one thing: God is close. But we must pay attention. He speaks in familiar places. He waits in long-kept traditions. He comes to us in the Eucharist, in the Lord's Day, in each other.

So we remember. Who we are. Whose we are. And that holiness begins not with achievement, but with attentiveness.

Here, in this quiet community of friends in the Lord, the trumpet still sounds. The Eucharist is still a feast. And our lives—quiet as they may seem—are still being shaped by grace.

Three questions to take into prayer today:

- Have I grown too used to Jesus—so used to Him that I no longer expect to be surprised?
- What part of the Eucharist might I savour more deeply today—as promise and gift?
- Who in my daily life might be carrying the voice of Christ in a way I've not yet noticed?

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.