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Saturday of the 17th Week in Ordinary Time

Date: Saturday, August 2, 2025 | **Season:** Ordinary Time after Easter | **Year:** C
First Reading: Leviticus 25:1, 8–17
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 67:2–3, 5, 7–8 | **Response:** Psalm 67:4
Gospel Acclamation: Matthew 5:10
Gospel Reading: Matthew 14:1–12
Preached at: the Chapel of Richartz House **in the** Archdiocese of Harare, Zimbabwe.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Some debts are not written on paper but carried in the heart. We carry the wrongs we've done, and sometimes the ones done to us. We carry memories of promises kept, and of promises broken. And God sees it all—not to punish, but to restore. Jubilee is His way of saying: enough. It's time to rest, to forgive, to return.

Leviticus is not a book we hear from often at Mass. In the two-year weekday lectionary, it appears only three times: twice during Ordinary Time and once during Lent. On Sundays, we hear from it only twice across the entire three-year cycle. So when it does come up, it's worth paying attention. Yesterday, we heard the instructions for Israel's great yearly feasts—Passover, Pentecost, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles. These marked sacred time for God's people—reminding them of His saving presence through the changing rhythm of the year. But today we hear something even rarer: the command for Jubilee—not a yearly festival, but a once-in-a-lifetime act of mercy, of freedom, of reset. A holy interruption in the cycle of debt and power. A command to stop, forgive, and return.

So what would Jubilee look like here in Zimbabwe?

Where land still carries the weight of injustice. Where the mines produce gold and lithium, but nearby families can't afford bread. Where many farm but don't always eat. Jubilee is not just about fields and finances. It is about people. It is about restoring dignity. Could we dare to believe that Jubilee is possible? That rest is holy, and that justice—real, concrete justice—is part of God's will?

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And could we imagine that call going even further?

Around the world, poorer nations—many here in Africa—are still burdened by debts taken out under unfair conditions. The interest payments keep hospitals underfunded and schools understocked. We are told: the debt must be paid. But the book of Leviticus says otherwise. Jubilee says: there is a time to cancel the debt—not as charity, but as justice. A time when mercy must speak louder than markets.

Pope Francis called this a matter of global conscience. Pope Leo XIV continues this teaching today, urging nations to see that peace cannot come while financial systems reward the rich and punish the poor. If the global economy builds palaces for a few while children go hungry, we are not living the Gospel. Jubilee says: forgive the debt. Not to forget the past—but to make a future possible.

And as we hear this call to Jubilee, it is no coincidence that the Church is now in the midst of the Great Jubilee of 2025, a Jubilee of Hope, proclaimed by Pope Francis in the bull *Spes non confundit* ("Hope does not disappoint"). This Holy Year is rooted in mercy and forgiveness, but its heart is hope—an invitation to return to Christ, renew our faith, and serve as pilgrims of hope in a world that hungers for justice and peace. Like the Jubilee in Leviticus, this Holy Year is spiritual and social: it calls us to open not only cathedral doors but the doors of our hearts, communities, and global economy. Jubilee does not belong only to the past. It belongs to now.

The Psalm today sings this dream: "Let the peoples praise you, O God." Peoples, plural. Not just one group, not just one history, but many. A joy that crosses borders and speaks many tongues. In a time when many are leaving our country looking for work, looking for a future, the Psalm reminds us: joy does not come from wealth alone. It comes from fairness, from justice, from God's faithful rule.

But the Gospel reminds us that such justice has a cost. John the Baptist is killed—not for wrongdoing, but for telling the truth. Herod, caught in his own pride and promises, orders his death to save face. A prophet is silenced, and the banquet carries on.

We know this pattern. Prophets in our time—those who speak for the poor, who defend the land, who challenge corruption—are not always imprisoned, but they are ignored. Mocked. Brushed aside. We silence prophets not only with swords,

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but with shrugs. Yet through our baptism, we are all called to share in Christ's prophetic voice. We are not called to keep quiet when truth needs to be spoken.

And here, quietly but powerfully, we find Saint Peter Faber, the Jesuit whose feast we celebrate today.

Faber was no firebrand. He didn't preach in the streets or confront kings. He listened. He accompanied. His gift was spiritual conversation—the slow, careful work of helping others hear God in their own hearts. He believed that change didn't begin with pressure, but with presence. With attention. With grace.

Yet beneath that gentle presence was a restless spirit—a soul that longed for God without measure. Pope Francis described it as "a restless, unsettled spirit, never satisfied." Faber was consumed by the desire to communicate the Lord, to be, as he once prayed, "expanded in God." This inner fire is what moved his feet across Europe, what sustained his patience in divided houses, and what gave his quiet words such lasting weight.

He lived what Saint Ignatius taught in Annotation 22 of the Spiritual Exercises: that we should "always be more ready to put a good interpretation on another's words than to condemn it." Faber began not with suspicion, but with trust. He walked across a Europe torn apart by religious war, and tried to heal it—one conversation at a time.

He was esteemed for his profound knowledge, and his companions—Ignatius, Xavier, Laínez—recognised not only his holiness, but his wisdom. And through his spiritual friendship and quiet guidance, he helped shape the future of the Society. He discovered vocations in the young and strengthened them in the wavering. It was Faber who guided Peter Canisius into the Jesuits, who helped solidify the calling of Francis Borgia, who became the third Superior General. His influence rippled far beyond what he ever saw.

We need that spirit today. In a world full of shouting, Faber teaches us to listen. In a Church sometimes tempted by pride, he reminds us of humility. In our families, in our communities, in our leadership—his way of spiritual conversation may be slow, but it is strong. It changes hearts.

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Like Faber, Saint Eusebius of Vercelli stood for truth, even when it cost him exile. He defended the Church's teaching at a time of deep confusion. And Saint Peter Julian Eymard, the Apostle of the Eucharist, reminds us that justice begins not in public squares but at the altar.

For in the Eucharist, we meet Christ—not only to be comforted, but to be changed. We receive His Body and Blood, and then we are sent. Sent to see Christ in the poor. To speak for those without a voice. To become what we receive—bread broken for the life of the world. If the altar does not lead us out into the world in service, then we've missed the point. Justice begins with adoration, but it must end in action.

So let debts be forgiven. Let hearts return. Let voices rise—not in anger, but in hope. The Kingdom of God does not begin with force, but with mercy. Not with noise, but with listening. Not with fear, but with the courage to begin again.

As we enter the week ahead, I invite you to reflect, as Faber would have done—with gentleness and honesty:

- Where in my life is God calling for a fresh start—for release, return, or reconciliation?
- How can I listen more deeply this week—with patience, with trust, with openness?
- What step—however small—can I take to live the Gospel more fully: in my community, in my work, or in how I respond to injustice?

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.

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