



18th Sunday in Ordinary Time



Date: Sunday, August 3, 2025 | **Season:** Ordinary Time after Easter | **Year:** C

First Reading: Ecclesiastes 1:2, 2:21–23

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 90:3–6, 12–13 | **Response:** Psalm 95:8

Second Reading: Colossians 3:1–5, 9–11

Gospel Acclamation: Matthew 5:3

Gospel Reading: Luke 12:13–21

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

The readings today, on this Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, are about what really matters in life. They remind us that money, achievement, and even honest labour—while not wrong in themselves—can’t carry us through to the end. They ask us, gently but firmly: after all this time, what have we truly given our hearts to? Are we still clinging to what fades, or are we ready to let Christ shape our last years as he shaped our first call?

In the first reading from Ecclesiastes, we hear the voice of a wise, weary man. He’s seen it all. He has worked, taught, written, and watched the rise and fall of many things. And he says simply, “Vanity of vanities.” The Hebrew word is *hebel*—like breath on a winter morning, gone almost as soon as it appears. But *hebel* doesn’t mean everything is worthless. It means it is fleeting, passing, ephemeral. The Preacher is not saying God’s creation is bad. The sun and the moon, the earth and our very bodies—these are not vain. What is vain is when we cling to what cannot last and expect it to fill us. Human striving, when it becomes an end in itself, leads only to weariness. But when we use what we’ve been given—possessions, intellect, influence—for the sake of others and in love for God, even fleeting things can have lasting worth.

We understand this. Many of us have already buried our ambitions, and a few of our illusions. We have had time to see how even good things pass. We have also seen what does not: the quiet witness of love, the hours in the confessional, the prayer offered behind a closed door. We have seen that what lasts is often what seemed least impressive at the time.

Psalm 90 brings this home with even greater force. “You turn us back to dust,” it says. Not to frighten, but to humble. Not to accuse, but to prepare. If we have fewer years ahead than behind, this psalm is not a threat. It is a companion. “Teach us to number our days,” the psalmist prays, “so we may gain wisdom.” This is not the wisdom of strategy or success, but the wisdom of trust and surrender. It comes from knowing our time is short and God’s mercy is long. It invites us to rely not on our own strength, but on God’s enduring love. As St John Paul II once said, it is in this humility—this clear-eyed acceptance of our limits—that eternity breaks through and gives even our smallest acts meaning.

This is the wisdom of daily fidelity. Of the examen. Of asking, not once but often: who did I serve today? How did I speak of Christ? Where did I resist grace?

The examen is not a heavy burden for us. It is second nature by now. But perhaps today it asks something deeper. Not only “Did I do good today?” but also, “Have I let go of the need to be seen doing it?” Or even, more painfully, “Have I asked for the grace to be free of needing to be liked, loved, or approved of?”

Then Jesus speaks. A man comes to him with a family complaint about inheritance. But Jesus won’t be drawn into the legal side. He goes straight to the heart: “Be on your guard against all kinds of greed, for life does not consist in an abundance of possessions.”

He tells the parable of the man with full barns. A successful man. A careful planner. But he never once turns to God. Never once asks what it is all for. And in the end, he is not called wise, but a fool. Not because he was wealthy—but because he mistook storage for security, and comfort for communion.

We may not have barns. But we know the temptation to store up other things: control over our surroundings, stubbornness in our opinions, the need to be right. The refusal to let younger men lead. These are just as dangerous, just as isolating.

Paul, writing to the Colossians, speaks clearly to us as well. “Seek the things that are above,” he says. Not as an escape, but as a reorientation of the heart. He calls greed what it truly is: idolatry. When we place our trust, our hope, our energy in created things instead of the Creator, we have built ourselves an idol. The rich man in the Gospel worships what he owns, and so becomes owned by it. But Paul tells us: let that self go. Let it die. Because your life is hidden with Christ

in God. The new self is not just a better version of the old—it is reborn, renewed, re-centred in Christ. And in this new life, all divisions fall away. Christ is all, and in all.

Zimbabwe has taught us to see how wealth and poverty can both be illusions. To be rich toward God, here, means generosity not just with money, but with presence, attention, patience. It means offering what we still have, and releasing what we no longer need to carry. After the parable, Jesus says more: “Do not worry about your life... strive for the kingdom... sell your possessions and give alms. Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out.” This is what it means to be rich toward God. Not an idea, but a life.

“Christ is all, and in all.” That is the centre of it. Not the long CVs, or the lectures, or even the missions. Christ is in the quiet brother who prays the rosary in the back pew. In the nurse who helps us dress. In the cook who calls us Father even when we feel more like a burden than a priest.

So what do these readings say to us? They say this: It is not too late to love more simply. Not too late to surrender what no longer serves. Not too late to begin again, quietly, inwardly, without fanfare. It is not too late to ask for that most difficult grace: to be free of the need to be liked, loved, or admired—so that we may be truly free to love.

St Ignatius would not ask us to do more. He would ask us to love better. To hear the voice of Christ not in a trumpet blast, but in the stillness of the heart. And to trust that even now, even in this season of life, we are still being called. Called to give. Called to let go. Called to be rich toward God.

Because in the end, we return to dust. But what we do in love—that remains.

Here are four questions to carry in prayer this week:

- What have I held onto too tightly, and what is Christ inviting me to release?
- In what quiet ways can I still serve, still love, still witness?
- Where in my day, even now, do I sense Christ quietly saying, “This is enough. Come, follow me again”?
- Have I asked for the grace to be free from needing to be liked, admired, or approved—so that I can love more freely and generously?

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.