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Tuesday of the 18th Week in Ordinary Time

Date: Tuesday, August 5, 2025 | **Season:** Ordinary Time after Easter | **Year:** C
First Reading: Numbers 12:1–13
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 51:3–7, 12–13 | **Response:** Psalm 51:3a
Gospel Acclamation: John 1:49b
Gospel Reading: Matthew 14:22–36
Preached at: the Chapel of Richartz House **in the** Archdiocese of Harare, Zimbabwe.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Today's readings are about storms—the ones that howl across the waters of Galilee and the ones that gather within our own hearts. They speak of the tempests that rise when authority is challenged, when relationships are strained, when fear swells like a wave and we forget the One who walks toward us across the deep. And they speak, too, of what anchors us: mercy, humility, and the unshakable presence of God in our midst.

Our first reading from the Book of Numbers finds us not in the grandeur of Sinai but in the intimacy—and frailty—of family. Miriam and Aaron, those closest to Moses, challenge his authority. Ostensibly it is about his Cushite wife, but the text betrays a deeper wound: "Has the Lord spoken only through Moses?" It is a familiar tune in the score of human jealousy—when love gives way to rivalry, when pride dresses itself up as principle. And it is here that we see the quiet courage of Moses. "Now the man Moses was very humble, more so than anyone else on the face of the earth," the narrator tells us—not as flattery, but as a key to understanding divine intimacy. For God speaks to the humble not in riddles, not through veils, but "mouth to mouth." It is the kind of relationship that is not earned by status, but by surrender.

Miriam, a prophet in her own right, suffers a strange fate. She is struck with leprosy—a visible sign of inner disorder—and the community halts its march. Moses, until now silent, cries out: "O God, please heal her!" It is a cry that still echoes through the corridors of our own leadership, in families, in religious communities, in the body politic of Zimbabwe. There are times when we must

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stop walking forward—not to punish, but to plead for healing. Moses does not seek vengeance; he seeks restoration. And this is the heart of the shepherd: not to win arguments, but to intercede for those who fall.

Psalm 51, that ancient lament of David after his sin, draws us deeper into the mystery of mercy. “A pure heart create for me, O God.” These are not words for the courtroom but for the confessional. This psalm is not about managing an image—it is about transformation. And here, dear friends, we are invited into the inner room of the Spiritual Exercises, where we see ourselves not as we pretend to be, but as we truly are. The examen, if prayed with honesty, lays bare our need for a Saviour. It teaches us that mercy is not indulgence. It is the fire that refines us, not the sugar that soothes us. In a land scarred by economic hardship, by political fatigue, and by broken trust—where the dignity of the poor is eroded by corruption and neglect—this cry must be ours too: “Do not cast me away from your presence.” For when the soul of a nation grows numb, it is not policies but penance that can lead us home.

In the Gospel according to Matthew, we are led to a lonely hilltop and a stormy sea. Jesus has just fed the multitudes, and yet He dismisses the crowd and climbs the mountain to pray. He withdraws not from duty, but to deeper communion. The early Church Fathers often saw this mountain as a symbol of Christ’s union with the Father—the place where His humanity meets His divinity. And while He prays, the disciples are far from land, battered by the waves. It is a scene that feels painfully close to our own moment: leaders adrift, systems straining against invisible winds, faith wobbling between hope and fear.

And then, in the dark, Jesus comes—walking on the water. Not to dazzle them, but to reassure them: “Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.” The Greek—*ego eimi*—evokes the name of God given to Moses at the burning bush. This is not just comfort. It is revelation. This is not only a man coming to help; it is God coming to save.

Peter, impulsive and brave, cries out, “Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.” And for a moment, defying gravity and logic and doubt, he walks. But when he sees the wind, he sinks. Not because the wind had power, but because his gaze had shifted. And still, Jesus reaches out—not to scold, but to catch.

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In this moment we see the essence of discipleship: not perfection, but proximity. The question is not whether we will sink. The question is, will we reach out? For Jesus does not promise us a life without storms. He promises us His hand.

Here in Zimbabwe, many are sinking. Not in Galilee's sea, but in unemployment, in the erosion of education, in the silent scourge of mental health that still carries stigma. Our people cry out for dignity, for direction, for someone to stretch out a hand. And we who are here—religious, students, parents, prophets—we must ask: Are we still looking at Jesus, or have we become distracted by the wind?

The feast we celebrate today, the Dedication of the Basilica of Saint Mary Major, draws us to the mother who never looked away. This was the first church in the West dedicated to Mary, and like a mother's home, it has sheltered generations of pilgrims in times of spiritual famine and imperial collapse. Mary did not walk on water. She simply remained present. She kept her eyes on her Son. And she teaches us to do the same.

Ignatius, in his Contemplation to Attain Divine Love, calls us to see God in all things and all things in God. To imagine ourselves in the boat, not as spectators but as participants. Who are we in today's Gospel? The one who doubts? The one who prays? The one who intercedes?

Let us not rush past these questions. Let us sit with them, as we would in the stillness of the Exercises. Let them rise and stir and trouble us, until they transfigure us.

So let us go forward—not with fear, but with faith. Not with thunderous certainty, but with the quiet courage of Moses. Let us stop when one of us is struck down. Let us cry out like David. Let us walk like Peter. Let us gaze like Mary.

And let us end, as we must, with questions:

- Where in my life have I taken my eyes off Jesus and begun to sink into fear?
- Who in my community is crying out for mercy while I remain silent?
- How is Christ inviting me this week to step out of the boat—into deeper faith, into risk, into love?

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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.