



Saturday of the 18th Week in Ordinary Time



Date: Saturday, August 9, 2025 | **Season:** Ordinary Time after Easter | **Year:** C

First Reading: Deuteronomy 6:4-13

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 18:2-3a, 3bc-4, 47+51 | **Response:** Psalm 18:2

Gospel Acclamation: 2 Timothy 1:10

Gospel Reading: Matthew 17:14-20

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

Dear brothers in Christ,

Today's readings call us to faith — not a comfortable faith, but one that digs deep, holds fast, and dares to move mountains. They ask us to remember who we are, whose we are, and what is possible when we trust in God's mercy rather than our own strength.

Our reading from Deuteronomy begins with words that have echoed through centuries — “*Shema Yisrael, Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai echad*” — “Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one.” This is the heartbeat of Jewish prayer, whispered by martyrs, sung by mothers, carved into doorposts. Moses pleads: *Remember*. Don't forget the God who led you, fed you, carried you. Don't forget when you arrive safely, when your stomach is full and your house is strong — because that is when forgetfulness becomes betrayal.

The Hebrew word ‘*abad*’ means both to worship and to serve. The Shema calls not for lip service but for whole-life devotion — lying down, rising up, walking, working, eating. It is a call to covenantal love — love that begins with God's initiative and asks for our full response.

And perhaps that call to remember is needed most not only here in Zimbabwe, but in the land where these words were first spoken. In Gaza today, where homes are shattered, children are starving, and families mourn, we face not only a crisis of war but of memory. When a people forget their own bondage, they risk becoming Pharaoh. The Shema on the lips means little if not written on the heart.

The God of the Shema is not a God of vengeance but of compassion, who hears the cries of the oppressed and calls His people to mercy. The memory of suffering must never justify its repetition.

And in our own country, where hunger and corruption and hardship dull our memory of who we are, the same warning applies. To forget God is to forget one another. But when we remember, we reawaken justice.

The Responsorial Psalm, a song of David born of danger, echoes this: “The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer.” These aren’t just metaphors. They are lifelines for a man hunted and hiding, who placed his trust not in weapons but in God’s strength and tenderness.

Our Gospel from Matthew shows a father kneeling, begging Jesus to heal his son. The disciples had tried and failed. Jesus’ response — “Faithless generation...” — is not harshness but sorrow. He grieves that they tried to act without prayer, to move mountains without intimacy with God. And yet He stays. He heals. He teaches.

He tells them: “If you had faith the size of a mustard seed...” — the tiniest of seeds, barely visible. Jesus often used it to describe the Kingdom of God — small beginnings, hidden strength, quiet growth. In Jewish thought too, the mustard seed symbolised potential and wisdom. Jesus takes this image and says: it’s not the size of faith that matters, but its sincerity. Not performance — dependence. Not noise — trust.

And how many mountains tower over us here? Soaring costs. Leaders who won’t lead. Young people losing hope. And still, Jesus says: faith, even small and trembling, can move them. But only through prayer and fasting — the practices that strip away ego and draw us back to God. These are not separate duties but united paths. Fasting helps the body grow quiet so the soul can hear.

St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross — Edith Stein — knew this path. A Jewish philosopher, she searched for truth and found it in the writings of St Teresa of Avila. In Christ crucified, she recognised the God of her ancestors. In the convent, she embraced both thought and silence. In Auschwitz, she walked with her people to death, offering her life “as a holocaust,” a living Shema. She shows us that faith doesn’t avoid suffering. It walks through it, with eyes fixed on the One who walks beside us.

For those of us following the Spiritual Exercises, today's Gospel invites us into the story. Picture yourself as the father — tired, heartbroken, unsure. Hear Jesus say: "Bring the boy here to me." Bring your doubts, your weariness, your small faith. He blesses mustard seeds. He plants them. He waits for them to grow.

As Jesuits we are not being asked to be superheroes of the spiritual life. We are being asked to remember. To remember the Lord, to pray with sincerity, and to serve with justice. To build communities and homes where the Shema is not just spoken but seen — in how we welcome strangers, share what little we have, and trust when all seems dry. Let our homes be places of remembrance. Let our faith become mustard seed faith.

So, dear friends, as we leave this moment of Word and Sacrament, let us ask ourselves:

- What mountain in my life — or in our country — have I stopped believing can be moved?
- Where is God calling me to prayer and fasting rather than panic and frustration?
- How can I live the Shema this week — not just say it, but embody it?

Amen.

Source: <https://sj.mcharlesworth.fr/homilies/2025-08aug-09-yc-ot-18/>

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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.

