Fr Matthew Charlesworth, SJ
https://sj.mcharlesworth.fr/

Tuesday of the 19th Week in Ordinary Time

Date: Tuesday, August 12, 2025 | **Season:** Ordinary Time after Easter | **Year:** C
First Reading: Deuteronomy 31:1–8
Responsorial Psalm: Deuteronomy 32:3–4b, 7–9, 12 | **Response:** Deuteronomy 32:9a
Gospel Acclamation: Matthew 11:29ab
Gospel Reading: Matthew 18:1–5, 10, 12–14
Preached at: the Chapel of Richartz House **in the** Archdiocese of Harare, Zimbabwe**.**

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Today's readings are about crossing over—across rivers, across ages, across that fragile threshold between fear and trust. In Deuteronomy 31, Moses stands on the edge of the Jordan, at the end of his life. He doesn't talk about his own past, but about courage and continuity: "Be strong… the Lord himself will go before you" (Deut 31:6).

The people face an unknown land—fortified cities, foreign peoples—and the temptation to forget God. Yet into that fear Moses speaks God's promise: "He will not leave you or forsake you" (Deut 31:6). Do not be afraid. This is the same voice heard by Abraham under the stars (Gen 15:1), by Gideon in the wine-press (Judg 6:23), by Mary at the annunciation (Luke 1:30), and by Joseph in a dream (Matt 1:20). It is never a denial of danger, but always the declaration that love is stronger. And when Moses lays hands on Joshua, he is not merely appointing a successor; he is entrusting the fragile future to faith, not fear. The hands that carried God's law through the wilderness now pass the mission on to another. True courage knows when to lead and when to let go.

Our psalm comes from the Song of Moses. It calls God the Rock—steadfast in shifting sands, just in a crooked world, faithful in fickle times (Deut 32:4). This Rock is more than strength; He is covenant. He binds Himself to His people, even when they turn from Him, and His faithfulness ensures that His promise never fails. Because He is the Rock, the One who does not forsake, His people can trust Him even when the path ahead is steep and uncertain. And here in Zimbabwe—where many walk the hard road of economic exile, where inequality casts its long shadow—remembering that Rock is not just poetry. It is a lifeline.

CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 · https://sj.mcharlesworth.fr/homilies/2025-08aug-12-yc-ot-19/

In Matthew 18, the disciples ask who is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus calls a child into their midst. Greatness, He says, is not self-assurance but surrender, not dominance but dependence (Matt 18:3–4). To become like children means trusting God completely, keeping a purity of heart that makes room for His work. These "little ones" are not just examples—they are special recipients of His care and revelation (Matt 18:10). Their humility makes them open to God's grace in a way the proud cannot be; they know they need help, and so their hearts are ready to receive. To despise them is to offend heaven itself.

Then Jesus tells the story of the shepherd who leaves ninety-nine sheep to find one that is lost (Matt 18:12–14). By human logic, it seems foolish. By God's logic, it is mercy—restless, risk-taking love that will not throw anyone away. In His eyes, no one is expendable; every single person is treasured.

This restless, risk-taking love is not just an ancient story—it is made present to us today in the life of the Church. The sacraments are the living signs of Christ's search for the lost. In baptism He claims us, in reconciliation He brings us home, in the Eucharist He feeds us for the journey. They are the wellspring of grace that empowers us to become shepherds ourselves, carrying His mercy into the hills and valleys of our own time.

Saint Jane Frances de Chantal, whose memory we honour today, shows us what this looks like in flesh and blood. Widowed at 28 and left to raise four young children, she could have withdrawn in grief. Instead, guided by her friend St Francis de Sales, she poured herself into a new calling. Together they founded the Visitation Sisters—a community marked not by harsh austerity, but by gentleness, humility, and hospitality. She once wrote, "We are to love people as they are, not as we would like them to be." Like the shepherd in today's Gospel, she sought out those who were lost—whether on the margins of society or in the wilderness of their own hearts. In her life we see a greatness shaped like a child and a leadership rooted in mercy.

For us in Zimbabwe, the call is the same: to seek the lost, to stand on the Rock, to walk without fear because God walks with us.

So this week, I invite you to pray with these questions:

- Where can I step down so someone else can rise?

CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 · https://sj.mcharlesworth.fr/homilies/2025-08aug-12-yc-ot-19/

- Who have I written off as “lost” when God may be looking for them right now?
- What childlike trust or humility do I need to recover so I can enter the Kingdom anew?

Amen.

Source: https://sj.mcharlesworth.fr/homilies/2025-08aug-12-yc-ot-19/

This homily is shared for personal and pastoral use. Please attribute the author and do not alter the meaning when quoting. If you wish this homily to be translated - there is an option on the website which will allow you to translate it into the language of your choice.

Licenced under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0) license.

The author does not speak for the Society of Jesus or for the Catholic Church.

Receive Fr Matthew Charlesworth's Homilies on **WhatsApp**

Receive Fr Matthew Charlesworth's Homilies on **Telegram**

Receive Fr Matthew Charlesworth's Homilies on **Signal**

Scan for Website on **Clearnet**

Scan for Onion Mirror **via TOR**

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.