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Wednesday of the 19th Week in Ordinary Time

Date: Wednesday, August 13, 2025 | **Season:** Ordinary Time after Easter | **Year:** C
First Reading: Deuteronomy 34:1–12
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 66:1–3a, 5, 8, 16–17 | **Response:** Psalm 66:20a, 10b
Gospel Acclamation: 2 Corinthians 5:19
Gospel Reading: Matthew 18:15–20
Preached at: the Chapel of Richartz House **in the** Archdiocese of Harare, Zimbabwe.

Dear Brothers,

Have you noticed that some of the most important moments in our lives happen in places we would never have chosen? A mountain we didn't plan to climb. A furnace we didn't want to enter. A meeting place we would rather avoid. Yet in each of these, God is waiting. They are all holy ground.

We begin on the mountain in Deuteronomy 34:1–12. Moses stands on Mount Nebo, the desert wind on his face, the whole Promised Land spread before him — Jericho gleaming in the distance, the Jordan curling like a silver thread. Yet he will not enter. Forty years of leading, pleading, interceding, and now the journey ends short of the goal. The rabbis call his death the "kiss of God" — not the kiss of relief after fulfilment, but the kiss of deep intimacy in apparent incompletion. *Lumen Fidei* 56 tells us that even death can be "experienced as the ultimate call to faith" — the final step where trust must be total, because the journey is no longer in our hands. Moses dies not seeing the end, but knowing the One who holds it. The mountain is holy ground because it is where we hand our dreams back to God, confident they will be fulfilled in His time, even if not by us.

From the mountain, the road does not lead to rest, but into the furnace. And is that not often our own path? One season ends, and the next is harder still. Psalm 66 speaks of burdens, of being tested "as silver is tried." We in Zimbabwe know this heat — savings melted away, work lost, trust strained. Yet the furnace is holy ground because God is not watching from outside; He is the Refiner within it. Hebrews tells us, "the Lord disciplines those whom he loves… for our good, in order that we may share his holiness" (Heb 12:6,10). This discipline, "though painful at the time, later yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness" (Heb 12:11).

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The Catechism reminds us that even after Baptism, we carry concupiscence — the inclination to sin — yet this is not sin itself (CCC 1426). Grace gives us the strength to resist it and to grow through the struggle. In God's hands, the fire we fear may consume us is the very fire that purifies and strengthens us.

From the furnace, we move into the meeting place — Matthew 18:15–20 — where Jesus invites us to the hard work of reconciliation. His pattern is gentle but firm: first face to face, then with others, then with the community. This is mercy in motion, not a sequence for punishment but for restoration. When He speaks of "binding and loosing," He is recalling the authority of the keys given to Peter and the apostles — authority over forgiveness, teaching, and the ordering of the Church's life (CCC 1444). At its heart is the Sacrament of Penance, where we are reconciled with God and with the Church (CCC 1496), recovering grace, peace, and renewed strength for the journey. As *Redemptor Hominis* 20 says, each person has "the individual right" to hear Christ say through His minister, "Your sins are forgiven." The meeting place is holy ground because Christ Himself stands there, turning estrangement into embrace.

In Ignatian prayer, you might walk this holy ground. Stand with Moses on the mountain; feel the ache of what will not be yours to finish, and sense the Lord's nearness. Step into the furnace; notice where the heat is most intense and where grace is keeping you steady. Walk into the meeting place; see who waits there for you, and picture Christ between you, speaking peace.

Today's saints, Pontian and Hippolytus, walked this ground. Enemies at first — a pope and a priest divided by bitter dispute — they were thrown into the mines of Sardinia. In that furnace, they met again as brothers. They died as martyrs, side by side. Their reconciliation was their final witness.

Our country, too, must walk this holy ground — the mountain of vision, the furnace of purification, the meeting place of reconciliation. No policy alone will heal our land; it takes face-to-face courage, the steady work of trust, and the will to bless God even while the fire still burns.

So let us ask:

- Where am I called to climb, even if I will not enter?
- What in my life's furnace is God using to refine me rather than destroy me?

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- Who waits for me at the meeting place, and will I have the courage to go there?

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.