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Memorial of the Queenship of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Date: Friday, August 22, 2025 | **Season:** Ordinary Time after Easter | **Year:** C
First Reading: Ruth 1:1, 3–6, 14b–16, 22
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 146:5–10 | **Response:** Psalm 146:1b
Gospel Acclamation: Psalm 25:4b, 5a
Gospel Reading: Matthew 22:34–40
Preached at: the Chapel of Richartz House **in the** Archdiocese of Harare, Zimbabwe.

Dear Brothers,

The readings this morning are about love that moves, love that costs, and love that crowns.

In the reading from the Book of Ruth, we meet a young widow standing at a crossroads of life. Her homeland is behind her, her security gone, and her future uncertain. Famine has driven Naomi's family from Bethlehem—ironically, "the house of bread"—to Moab, a foreign land. There, death strips Naomi of husband and sons, leaving three women vulnerable in a society where widowhood often meant destitution.

Naomi urges her daughters-in-law to return to their own homes. One does; Ruth does not. She makes a choice that defies reason and self-interest: "Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God." This is not mere sentiment—it is *hesed*, covenantal loyalty, a steadfast love that mirrors God's own faithfulness. Ruth steps into a new land, a new people, and a new faith, not because it is safe, but because it is right. Her *hesed* foreshadows the love of God Himself, who steps into our story not because we deserve it, but because He is faithful. That same love reaches its fullness in the "yes" of Mary, who consents not out of certainty, but out of trust.

Psalm 146 sings the same truth in praise: "Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord their God." The psalmist's vision is not abstract—this God executes justice for the oppressed, gives bread to the hungry, lifts up the bowed down, upholds the orphan and widow. This God is no distant ruler but one whose reign is measured by His care for the most fragile. In

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Zimbabwe today, where economic hardship and political uncertainty weigh heavily on the poor, where bread is both a symbol and a scarcity, this psalm is not mere poetry—it is a summons. This God, whose reign is measured by His care for the most fragile, calls us to reflect His priorities. To be defenders of dignity, protectors of the vulnerable, builders of community. And here too, "the house of bread" echoes—Bethlehem becomes a whisper of the Eucharist, the Bread of Life, brought into the world by the one who first bore Him in her womb. Mary does not only give birth to Christ—she brings us the Bread who feeds the hunger of the world.

In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus unites heaven and earth in two commands: love God with all you are, and love your neighbour as yourself. He does not allow us to choose one and neglect the other. Love of God without love of neighbour becomes empty ritual; love of neighbour without love of God risks becoming mere philanthropy. Together they form the one commandment of the Kingdom—a love that adores in silence and acts with courage.

On this feast of the Queenship of Mary, we see these loves perfectly intertwined. Her queenship is not about crowns of gold but about the crown of service. She says yes to God in Nazareth, yes on the road to Bethlehem, yes at the wedding in Cana, yes at the foot of the Cross. She reigns because she serves, and she leads because she loves without calculation. That service is not incidental to her title—it is its foundation. She is Queen because her Son is King, and she shares uniquely in His redemptive work.

Her Assumption, which we celebrated just eight days ago, is not merely a moment of honour—it is the gateway to her crown. She who bore the Bread of Heaven now reigns beside Him, not from a throne of might but from the mercy of a sacred heart poured out. And so it is fitting that today, under her title as Queen of Peace, the Holy Father has invited the whole Church to enter into a day of prayer and fasting—for peace in our world, especially in the Holy Land, in Ukraine, and in every place where hatred makes widows and orphans of God's children. "I ask you," the Pope said, "to include in your intentions the supplication for the gift of peace—a peace that is disarmed and disarming—for the whole world."

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Mary, who once wrapped the Prince of Peace in swaddling cloth, now wraps the wounded world in her intercession. And we, her sons and daughters, are summoned to join her—to kneel, to fast, to weep with those who weep, and to beg the Lord to wipe away every tear born of war.

In our Ignatian prayer, she invites us to place ourselves at her side in these scenes—asking: How would I respond if the angel spoke to me? Would I hasten to serve like she did with Elizabeth? Could I stand my ground in the shadow of the Cross? These are not questions for the past; they are invitations for the present.

The message today is clear. Ruth shows us that love means stepping into another's struggle. The psalm shows us that God Himself stands with the poor. Jesus calls us to love in both directions—upward to God and outward to neighbour. And Mary shows us how to wear love like a crown. In our Zimbabwean reality, perhaps the greatest way we honour her Queenship is not with flowers on a statue but with hands and hearts given to the hungry, the displaced, the forgotten.

So let us walk as Ruth walked, sing as the psalmist sang, obey as Jesus commanded, and serve as Mary served. And in the quiet of our examen today, may we ask:

- Where today have I chosen the harder road for the sake of love?
- Who in my life is God asking me to accompany more closely?
- How can I crown Mary this week by imitating her Son's love for the least?

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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.

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