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Saturday of the 20th Week in Ordinary Time

Date: Saturday, August 23, 2025 | **Season:** Ordinary Time after Easter | **Year:** C
First Reading: Ruth 2:1–3, 8–11, 4:13–17
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 128:1b–5 | **Response:** Psalm 128:4
Gospel Acclamation: Matthew 23:9b, 10b
Gospel Reading: Matthew 23:1–12
Preached at: the Chapel of Richartz House **in the** Archdiocese of Harare, Zimbabwe.

Dear Brothers,

God often works through small, quiet things — small acts of love, small choices to be kind, small steps taken in faith. Today's readings show us again and again that these small things, when done with love, can shape the world. From Ruth gathering leftover grain in a stranger's field, to Jesus warning against religious pride, to Saint Rose caring for the sick in her own backyard, we are reminded that greatness begins in humility and grows through service.

And Jesus himself shows us the deepest truth about this path. He fills this picture with new meaning. He enjoys dominion because he is a servant. He receives glory because he is willing to kneel. He wears the crown of kingship because he lays down his life for others. This is not just something he teaches — it is who he is. God is not only humble; God is humility itself. God does not save from above, but from beside. This is his style — closeness, compassion, tenderness. This is how he moves through the world.

In the first reading, we meet Ruth — a foreigner, a widow, poor and alone in a strange land. She has nothing but her love for Naomi, her mother-in-law, and a willingness to work. She goes to glean in the fields, picking up the stalks of barley left behind. Jewish law required landowners to leave the edges of their fields for the poor — the widow, the orphan, the stranger. But Boaz goes further. He doesn't just obey the rule; he protects Ruth, sees her dignity, and treats her with honour. That simple act — not loud, not famous — changes everything. Ruth becomes the great-grandmother of David. And one day, from her line, the Saviour will be born.

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This is how God's plan unfolds — not through thrones or triumphs, but through small acts of mercy that echo into eternity. In Zimbabwe today, where the harvest has been thin and the rains have failed, we are asked the same question: what edges of my field — my resources, my time, my energy — can I leave for others? Who around me is stooping in the sun, trying to gather what little they can?

Psalm 128 shows us the blessing of those who walk in God's ways — not with riches, but with peace. A table where food is shared, children growing strong, a home built on love. This is what God's justice looks like: not a courtroom, but a kitchen table; not a lawbook, but a life of kindness. And in a land where so many families are scattered — some abroad, some searching for work, some just holding on — we hear again this gentle call: tend what you can, love those around you, build peace where you are.

Then Jesus speaks, clearly and sharply, against those who use religion to seek honour rather than to serve. He warns about loving titles more than truth, about piling burdens on others while lifting none themselves. And then he tells us plainly: "The greatest among you must be your servant." He doesn't mean a servant in name — he means in action. In the old Jewish tradition, the greatest teacher wasn't the one with the most followers, but the one whose life looked most like God's word. Jesus goes further: the only title that matters is the towel and the basin. The only crown that counts is the one shaped by love.

In Zimbabwe today, where corruption has weighed down the poor and lifted up the proud, these words still ring true. The measure of leadership is not how high you climb but how many you lift up. The measure of faith is not how loudly you speak it, but how humbly you live it.

That's the thread running through it all. Ruth, who could have taken care of herself, chose to care for Naomi. Boaz, who could have simply followed the rule, went beyond it in love. Jesus, who could have demanded honour, chose the cross. Holiness begins when pride ends. And God loves humility because it allows him to come close. Humility is not weakness. It is the door through which God enters.

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Saint Rose of Lima lived this deeply. She was known for her beauty and her brilliance, but she laid them both down. She turned her family's garden into a shelter for the sick. She fasted, prayed, and lived simply, not to be praised, but to stay close to Christ. She was hidden from the world — but she was never hidden from God. She shows us that holiness is not about being seen. It is about seeing others, and loving them with everything you have.

So what does this all mean for us?

It means that what matters most in the eyes of God is not what we achieve, but how we serve. It means we must look not to be lifted up, but to bend down. Because in God's kingdom, the way up is down. The way to live is to give your life away.

I invite you to take these questions to prayer:

- Where in my life am I being asked to "leave the edges of my field" for someone who needs help?
- Whose burden could I help carry — even in a small way?
- If Jesus looked at my life today, where would he see the heart of a servant?

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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.