Fr Matthew Charlesworth, SJ
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23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Date: Sunday, September 7, 2025 | **Season:** Ordinary Time after Easter | **Year:** C
First Reading: Wisdom of Solomon 9:13–18b
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 90:3–6, 12–14, 17 | **Response:** Psalm 90:1
Second Reading: Philemon 1:9–10, 12–17
Gospel Acclamation: Psalm 119:135
Gospel Reading: Luke 14:25–33
Preached at: the Chapel of Emmaus House **in the** Archdiocese of Harare, Zimbabwe**.**

Brothers and sisters in Christ,
Today the Lord invites us to count our days, weigh what truly matters, and follow Him with a free heart.

The Book of Wisdom reminds us how limited we are. "We cannot trace the counsel of God… our bodies are a burden, our minds a tent" (Wis 9:13–17). Still, the author prays that God may send Wisdom from His throne to guide us. As Saint John Paul II said, true wisdom is a participation in the mind of God. It is not just intelligence, but the grace to see as God sees—so we can live as God calls us to live.

This wisdom is not found in quick answers. It is not a bolt from heaven. It comes slowly, like morning light, like tea steeping in water. It infuses us over time through prayer, through surrender, through the quiet work of the Holy Spirit. The more we seek it, the more we receive it.

The Psalmist also knows the limits of life. "You turn us back to dust," he says, and compares us to grass that fades by evening. But then comes this prayer: "Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a wise heart" (Ps 90:12). This is not a fearful prayer, but a hopeful one. It asks God to help us see time as a gift, not a burden—to help us live each day wisely and well.

Saint Paul gives us an example of that kind of wisdom in his short letter to Philemon. From prison, he asks his friend to welcome Onesimus—not as a slave, but as a brother in Christ. Paul doesn't order him; he appeals with love. In a

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world that measured people by power, wealth, or usefulness, Paul speaks a new truth: in Christ, all people have equal dignity. That's the real measure of a person—not their status, but their belovedness.

In the Gospel, Jesus turns to the crowd and speaks strong words. He says that unless we "hate" our family—even our own life—we cannot be His disciples (Lk 14:26). The word "hate" here does not mean cruelty. It's a way of saying "to prefer less." Jesus is calling us to put Him first. As Pope John Paul II explains, this is about the priority of love—loving Jesus above all, so that all other loves are purified and made right.

Then Jesus gives two examples: a builder counting the cost before laying a foundation, and a king calculating his strength before battle. His point is clear. Before we follow, we must count the cost. But once we say yes, we stop keeping score. We give everything—freely, joyfully, completely.

This is where Saint Ignatius helps us. His prayer asks God for the grace "to give and not to count the cost." Some hear this and wonder: does it contradict today's Gospel? Not at all. It completes it. Before the yes, we count with care. After the yes, we stop counting. Before mission, we make a true accounting of time, energy, and cost. But once we commit, we give without keeping track. Love does not carry a ledger.

All the readings today share the same message: learn to measure wisely.
Wisdom helps us see what pleases God.
The Psalm teaches us to value each day.
Paul reminds us that people are not property but brothers and sisters.
Jesus calls us to count the cost before we follow Him—and then to love without limits.

And wisdom is not the same as intelligence. We have all met clever people who lack depth. And we've met quiet, humble souls who radiate wisdom without saying much. The author of Wisdom reminds us why human reason alone is not enough. Our minds are shaped by our frailty, by the press of mortality, by earthly fear. But the Spirit lifts our gaze. Wisdom lets us look first to heaven—so that we can return to earth and live well. It doesn't remove us from life; it teaches us how to walk through life with God's vision. And it is through Scripture—the Word made flesh and spoken—that we are taught how to see.

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In Zimbabwe today, we already do a lot of counting. We count power cuts, school fees, and the price of basic provisions at the shops. Teachers, nurses, and traders carry more than their share of hardship. But the deeper question is this: how do we count? Do we measure our lives by anxiety—or by faith? Do we count others by status—or with the eyes of Christ?

The Church teaches that every person is made in the image of God (CCC §1700). No one is just a tool, a vote, or a statistic. Each one matters. When we remember this, our families change, our parishes change, our decisions change. That is the kind of wisdom we are praying for today.

But this wisdom takes practice. Saint Ignatius of Loyola said that real freedom is the ability to choose what leads us closer to God—even when it is difficult. In his Spiritual Exercises, he invites us to ask three simple questions in prayer:
What have I done for Christ?
What am I doing for Christ?
What ought I do for Christ?

Let those questions shape your week. Picture Onesimus knocking at your door. Will you welcome him as a brother, or turn him away with a label? Picture Jesus turning to you on the road. Will you carry the cross—or carry the scorecard?

Blessed Carlo Acutis and Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati, canonised today, lived what the readings teach us. They counted their days with wisdom, put Christ first, and saw each person—rich or poor, online or in person—not as a number, but as a other or sister in Christ. They counted the cost, and gave without counting.

This week, take one small step.
Pay a fairer price to a market vendor.
Visit someone who is alone.
Help a tired teacher.
Contribute something to the parish food shelf for the poor.
Plan it wisely—then give it freely.

Each evening, make the Examen.
Thank God for one grace.
Ask for light.
Review your day.

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Where did I choose love?
Where did I choose comfort?
Where do I need forgiveness?
Ask for mercy.
Ask for freedom.
Then rest in peace.

Lord, let your face shine on your servant; teach me your ways (Ps 119:135). Help us to count well, to love without measure, and to follow You freely. Amen.

- What comfort or fear is blocking a concrete act of justice for me?
- Who is my Onesimus—the person I've judged by status, not by love?
- In my evening prayer, where did God teach me to number my days with wisdom, and what step will I take tomorrow?

May the Holy Spirit give us the wisdom to count—and the grace to give—as Christ did.

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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.