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Memorial of St John Chrysostom, Bishop, Doctor of the Church

Date: Saturday, September 13, 2025 | **Season:** Ordinary Time after Easter | **Year:** C
First Reading: 1 Timothy 1:15–17
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 113:1b–7 | **Response:** Psalm 113:2
Gospel Acclamation: John 14:23
Gospel Reading: Luke 6:43–49
Preached at: the Chapel of Emmaus House **in the** Archdiocese of Harare, Zimbabwe**.**

Have you ever picked a fruit that looked perfect, only to bite into it and find it rotten? Jesus says in the Gospel today: “No good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit… each tree is known by its own fruit.” (Luke 6:43–44)

He’s not talking about trees. He’s talking about us. The way we speak, the way we treat each other, the choices we make when no one is watching—these are the fruits. And the fruit always tells the truth about the roots.

St Paul, in the First Letter to Timothy, puts it plainly: “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst.” (1 Timothy 1:15) Paul isn’t pretending. He remembers the man he used to be—violent, proud, full of hate. But then God reached into his life, right down to the roots, and changed them. Paul says: “For that very reason I received mercy, so that in me… Jesus Christ might display his utmost patience.” (v. 16)

The fruit of Paul’s life—courage, joy, service, praise—came from that deep change of heart. Just as Jesus says, “The good person, out of the good treasure of the heart, produces good… for it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks.” (Luke 6:45)

Psalm 113 sings the same truth. “He raises the poor from the dust, and lifts the needy from the ash heap.” (Psalm 113:7) In ancient Israel, the ash heap was where the forgotten were left to survive—sick, rejected, invisible. But the psalm says that God sees them. He does not look away. He bends down to lift them up.

And that’s what mercy does. It stoops low, and raises up. It changes hearts like Paul’s. It heals lives that the world forgets. And it asks us to do the same.

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In Zimbabwe today, we don't need to look far to find the "ash heaps." They are in our neighbourhoods, our clinics, our streets. If the roots of our country feed only the rich, and ignore the hungry, the whole tree will suffer. A society that forgets the poor forgets God. And the fruit will show it.

Then Jesus gives us a second image: a house. "Everyone who comes to me, and hears my words and acts on them… is like a man building a house, who dug deeply and laid the foundation on rock." (Luke 6:47–48) And when the flood came, that house stood strong. But the one who just listened, without acting, built on sand. And when the storm came, Jesus says, "it fell—and great was the ruin." (v. 49)

So we ask: what is my life built on? What holds me up when storms come?

Let us look honestly at the roots of our own hearts. The daily examen is like walking through the orchard of our soul with God. What fruit have I produced today? Where has it been sweet? Where has it been bitter? Where is God trying to dig deeper, or cut back to allow greater growth?

And today, on the feast of Saint John Chrysostom, we remember someone who let God dig deep. His name means "golden mouth," but he didn't just preach well, he lived the Gospel. He once said: "If you cannot see Christ in the beggar at the church door, you will never find him in the chalice." (Homily 4 on 1 Tim 1:15) That's the test. Not how loud our prayers are, or how clever our sermons, but how deep our love goes.

Brothers and sisters, the storms will come. They may already be here. But if we are rooted in Christ, we will not fall. And our fruit will not be wasted. The fruit will tell the truth about the roots.

Let us take a moment of silence, and ask the Holy Spirit to show us the roots of our hearts—and the fruit of our lives.

Here are three questions for our prayer today:

- What does the fruit of my life show about what I'm rooted in?
- Where have I been building on sand instead of rock?
- Who near me is sitting in the dust—and how can I help lift them up?

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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.