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Memorial of St Hildegard of Bingen, virgin and doctor

Date: Thursday, September 18, 2025 | **Season:** Ordinary Time after Easter | **Year:** C
First Reading: 1 Timothy 4:12–16
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 111:7–10 | **Response:** Psalm 111:2
Gospel Acclamation: Matthew 11:25
Gospel Reading: Luke 7:36–50
Preached at: the Chapel of Emmaus House **in the** Archdiocese of Harare, Zimbabwe**.**

The readings today are about how we see—and whether we let mercy change what we see. They ask us to look more honestly at others, more gently at ourselves, and more deeply at God.

In our first reading today from the First Letter to Timothy, Paul tells Timothy not to let anyone look down on him because he is young. That may sound simple, but it's a hard truth. In every age—including our own—young people are often ignored, their voices dismissed, their dreams set aside. But Paul reminds us that age is not the measure of wisdom. What matters is faithfulness—how we live, how we speak, how we love. That's where leadership begins: not with power, but with witness.

Paul's advice is very practical. Pay attention to yourself and your teaching. Persevere. This is the spiritual life in its plainest form. And it echoes what St Ignatius taught: notice what's moving in your heart. Stay close to what brings you closer to God. Be honest about what pulls you away.

The Psalm today reminds us that God's works are just, steady, and trustworthy. Not quick. Not flashy. Just faithful. In a time when many in Zimbabwe feel that life is stuck—when the young are jobless, the old are tired, and the land itself is groaning under pressure—we need to hear this promise: God is not done. His justice still unfolds, even when we can't see it yet. His faithfulness is still at work, even in the dry season.

In the Gospel from Luke, we meet a woman who has been judged by others. She walks into a room full of men who know her past. But she doesn't speak. She kneels at Jesus' feet. She weeps. She touches. She pours out oil and love. She

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gives everything—without words.

And what does Jesus do? He sees her. Not as others do. He sees her love, her courage, her trust. He sees the truth of her heart. And he says, 'You are forgiven. Your faith has saved you. Go in peace.'

This moment is at the heart of Christian life: when we let go of pride, kneel in our need, and trust that Christ will not turn us away. And he never does.

It's also a moment that speaks to today's world, where many are quick to judge, but slow to understand. Where people are labelled and shamed—sometimes in our families, our parishes, our politics—because of who they are or what they've done. But Jesus doesn't begin with judgement. He begins with mercy. And that mercy is what makes healing possible.

Today we remember St Hildegard of Bingen, a woman who lived in 12th-century Germany, but whose voice still speaks clearly to our time. She was a poet, preacher, healer, and scientist. But most of all, she was a prophet. She spoke of the deep connection between God, creation, and the human soul. She warned that when we harm the earth, or misuse power, or silence the truth, we create wounds not just in the world, but in ourselves.

Hildegard spoke of *viriditas*—the greening life of God that runs through all things. She saw the world as full of God's energy—living, breathing, growing. And she believed that when we stop listening to the voice of creation, we stop listening to God.

Her vision is echoed today in *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis' letter to the world about care for our common home. In it, he reminds us that everything is connected—poverty, pollution, land, water, work, dignity. And the earth, like the woman in the Gospel, is weeping at our feet, waiting for someone to notice.

Here in Zimbabwe, we don't need to be told that the land is suffering. We see it in the failing rains, the dry wells, the bare fields. We see it in the struggles of farmers, in the hunger of children, in the long queues for basics. Creation is speaking. Are we listening?

Like Timothy, we may feel too small or too young or too weak to respond. Like the woman in the Gospel, we may feel unworthy. But Christ calls us not to be afraid. What matters is that we begin. That we turn again to God. That we act,

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even in small ways, with faith, with love, and with mercy.

And maybe the most important thing we can do is learn to see again. To look at our world with fresh eyes. To see others not as problems, but as people. To see the earth not as a resource to exploit, but as a gift to cherish. To see ourselves not through shame or pride, but through the eyes of Christ, who knows us, loves us, and never gives up on us.

So let us ask this morning:

- Where is God inviting me to see others with more mercy?
- What part of creation have I ignored—or even harmed—that I now need to care for?
- What is one simple way I can act with love and justice, even if the world never notices?

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.