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Memorial of St. Andrew Kim Taegon, priest and martyr, St. Paul Chong Hasang, catechist and martyr, and their companions, martyrs

Date: Saturday, September 20, 2025 | **Season:** Ordinary Time after Easter | **Year:** C
First Reading: 1 Timothy 6:13–16
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 100:1b–5 | **Response:** Psalm 100:2
Gospel Acclamation: Luke 8:15
Gospel Reading: Luke 8:4–15
Preached at: the Chapel of Emmaus House **in the** Archdiocese of Harare, Zimbabwe**.**

The readings today are about the hidden power of not giving up—not simply human effort, but the grace-filled cooperation between God's patient sowing and our open, persevering hearts.

Dear friends in Christ,

Jesus tells us a parable in the Gospel. A farmer throws seed everywhere—on the path, among rocks, into thorny ground, and finally onto good soil. Some seed is eaten, some dries up, some gets choked. But some bears great fruit. We've heard this story before, but let's pause.

Luke alone includes small details that deepen the picture: the seed on the path is trampled underfoot before the birds devour it; the rocky soil lacks not only depth but also moisture. These aren't just agricultural observations—they are spiritual insights. The Word of God can be crushed by indifference, dried out by spiritual drought, or choked by fear and distraction. But the seed still carries the potential for abundant fruit.

The farmer is not just a figure of diligence—he is a figure of Christ, the true Sower, sent by the Father. And He sows everywhere. He is not calculating or cautious. He is extravagantly generous—even wasteful by human standards. He casts the Word into all kinds of hearts, even those that seem hopeless. This is the mystery of divine perseverance. God never gives up. He keeps sowing. He keeps loving.

The Gospel ends with a detail unique to Luke: the seed that bears fruit does so through "patient endurance" (v.15). This is the key. The fruit doesn't come quickly or easily. The good soil is not just about initial enthusiasm; it's about

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staying open, staying faithful, through the long seasons of silence, suffering, or slow growth.

And that kind of endurance is not something we produce by effort alone. As St Francis de Sales reminds us, perseverance is "the best gift we can desire in this life," and it is a gift we must ask for—through prayer, through the sacraments, and through walking with others in faith.

This brings us to the words of Paul in our first reading. He charges Timothy to remain faithful, to keep the commandments without stain or blame until Christ appears. Paul reminds him that Jesus made the good confession before Pontius Pilate—not with noise or protest, but with a quiet, firm trust in the Father's will. That, too, is patient endurance.

Just as the sower trusts the soil, Paul urges Timothy to trust the Word that has been planted in him—for the same divine perseverance is behind it all. The one who is coming is the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality and dwells in unapproachable light. We are not holding on to a mere idea. We are holding on to the One who holds us.

The Church has always taught that perseverance is not just about willpower. St Augustine tells us we can only endure because God gives us strength to do so. St Thomas Aquinas says perseverance must continue to the end of life—and so it depends entirely on God's grace. The Council of Trent teaches that prayer must be constant; we must keep knocking, like the widow who wore out the judge through sheer persistence.

This grace is not abstract. It is alive in people. We see it in today's saints—Andrew Kim Taegon, Paul Chong Hasang, and their companions. These 103 Korean martyrs, canonised on 6 May 1984, lived the Gospel with extraordinary courage. They lived in a time when Christianity was forbidden, attacked, and criminalised. From 1791 through 1866, waves of persecution swept the land. Yet they remained faithful.

Andrew Kim, the first Korean priest, was killed at just 25 years old. Paul Chong, a lay catechist, wrote to the Pope asking for missionaries to be sent. He, too, was killed. Women, children, elders—some just beginning their lives—chose to suf-

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fer rather than deny Christ. They lived in a land filled with rocks and thorns: hostility, fear, betrayal. But their hearts remained open. They were good soil. And the seed they received bore fruit—abundantly.

Today, the Korean Church is one of the strongest in the world. That's what God's patient sowing can do.

But perseverance is not only for martyrs. Pope Francis reminded us that hidden saints live among us—parents who keep going without recognition, workers who remain honest, students who keep hoping despite uncertainty. These are the saints of the every day. They persevere quietly in homes, hospitals, classrooms, and market stalls. They don't make headlines. But their lives bear fruit.

And what about us, here in Zimbabwe? Many of us are tired. Tired of broken systems, of corruption, of trying to build a future with too few tools. Students wonder whether their efforts will ever bear fruit. Workers wonder whether their dignity will ever be honoured. Families wonder where tomorrow's bread will come from. It's easy to feel like the seed will never grow.

But it will. God is not finished sowing. He continues to plant His Word into our dry fields, into broken systems, into uncertain dreams. And still, the seed is not wasted.

So what does it look like to become good soil? Let me offer four simple ways to cultivate the grace of perseverance:

1. **Pray faithfully, even simply.** A quiet prayer each day—"Jesus, help me"—can soften even the hardest heart. Pope Francis calls this the prayer of the persevering widow: it transforms not just circumstances, but the heart itself.
2. **Examine the soil of your heart.** Saint Ignatius invites us to use the Examen to notice where our hearts are closed, distracted, or dry—and where they are open.
3. **Come to the sacraments.** Confession and the Eucharist are the water and light that make growth possible. As Francis de Sales says, they are the ordinary means by which God strengthens the soul.
4. **Be faithful in small things.** Pope Francis spoke of the "hidden saints" who live love quietly—washing dishes, teaching children, showing up for work. That's where perseverance begins, in commitment.

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So today, hear the parable again—not as a story of failure, but as a promise. Christ the Sower is patient. The Father does not give up on you. And the Holy Spirit is working—even in soil that seems dry or buried in stones.

Every seed already carries the fruit inside it—even when we cannot yet see it.

Ask for the gift of perseverance. Trust in God's slow work. And believe that fruit will come.

Here are three questions for your examen today:

- Where in my life am I tempted to stop listening to God's Word?
- What distractions or fears are choking my desire to grow?
- Where is Christ inviting me to remain faithful, even when I don't see results?

Let us pray:

Lord Jesus, faithful Sower,
You scatter your Word into every corner of our lives.
Grant us the grace of perseverance,
That we may remain rooted in your love, even when the soil is hard.
May we pray with constancy,
Trusting that you are at work.
Make us like the Korean martyrs—faithful in little things,
And willing to say yes, again and again.
May your hidden power bear fruit in us—
Peace, charity, and a quiet, enduring witness.
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.

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