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Monday of the 27th Week in Ordinary Time

Date: Monday, October 6, 2025 | **Season:** Ordinary Time after Easter | **Year:** C
First Reading: Jonah 1:1–2, 2:11
Responsorial Psalm: Jonah 2:3–5, 8 | **Response:** Jonah 2:7
Gospel Acclamation: John 13:34
Gospel Reading: Luke 10:25–37
Preached at: the Chapel of Emmaus House **in the** Archdiocese of Harare, Zimbabwe**.**

The readings today are about the mercy that notices and stops, the love that crosses boundaries, and the God who chases us down even when we run.

Dear friends in Christ,

It is no small thing to run from the voice of God. Jonah tried. Not with clenched fists, but with a ticket to Tarshish and a heart full of reluctance. Our famous first reading from the Book of Jonah finds him sailing in the opposite direction of his calling—not toward Nineveh, but away from it. Away from the burden of mercy. Away from the people he would rather see destroyed than forgiven.

And who could blame him? Nineveh was not just foreign—it was feared. A city swollen with pride and violence, a sworn enemy of Israel. To call them to repentance felt not just dangerous, but undeserved. But the mercy of God does not bend to our preferences. It does not consult our grudges. It is not cautious. It is not conservative. It is abundant and scandalous and persistent.

And so God sends a storm. And when that doesn't change Jonah's direction, He sends a fish. And in the belly of that fish, in that place of darkness and suffocation, Jonah begins to pray. The psalm we hear today is the voice of a man whose descent has finally brought him low enough to look up. "Out of my distress I cried to the Lord, and he answered me." The Hebrew word for "went down" (*yarad*) is repeated throughout the text—Jonah goes *down* to Joppa, *down* into the ship, *down* into the sea. Sin always pulls us *down*. But grace always reaches deeper still.

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In that strange cloister of seaweed and silence, Jonah finds something he could not find on dry land: surrender. And with surrender comes rescue—not only for Jonah, but for Nineveh.

And then Jesus tells a story. In our even more famous Gospel from Luke, a lawyer stands up to test Him: "Who is my neighbour?" he asks. And Jesus, as He so often does, responds with a parable that turns the world on its head.

A man is beaten, stripped, and left half-dead on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho—a famously dangerous descent, winding through rocky terrain and shadowed gullies. A priest passes by. A Levite passes by. Men with robes and rituals, with places to be and hands too clean to get bloody.

But then comes a Samaritan. A heretic, by Jewish standards. A man whose presence would have made most in the crowd recoil. And yet it is he who stops. He who sees. He who is moved with compassion—*splagchnizomai*, the same word used to describe Jesus when He looks at the crowds, the sick, the hungry. It is mercy from the gut.

The Samaritan binds wounds, pours oil and wine—symbols of healing and covenant—and pays for the man's care. Then he promises to return. It is not a gesture. It is a commitment. And in doing so, he not only saves a man but redraws the map of moral responsibility. Our immediate concern is not just to those in our families or nations, but to anyone who is in need, especially the outcast and the stranger.

Jesus is not just answering the question, "Who is my neighbour?" He is reshaping the question itself: "To whom will I be a neighbour?" The difference is everything, and is being asked of us even today.

We must ask ourselves this in our own Jericho roads. We do not need to travel far to find the wounded. We see them here, in Zimbabwe, every day. A young girl walking hours each morning to reach a distant school. A boy at university whose fees went unpaid when his father lost work. A mother in Harare who must choose between medicine and mealie-meal. These are not statistics. These are *our* neighbours.

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Catholic Social Teaching insists that every person is endowed with dignity—not by law, but by the image of God etched into every soul. And that dignity does not disappear when a man is unconscious on the roadside, nor when a girl is behind in school, nor when a foreigner crosses our border looking for safety and refuge.

But let us also be honest—the hard part is not knowing this. The hard part is actually stopping. Mercy requires going to the margins. Compassion is costly. The priest and the Levite weren't evil. They were busy keeping the laws. But love that does not interrupt us is not yet Christian love. Mercy that does not unsettle our routines is not yet the Gospel, the Good News.

Saint Bruno, whom we honour today, knew what it was to step away from the noise and say yes to God in silence. He left a promising career to found the Carthusians, a community of hermits devoted to solitude, contemplation, and prayer. His path was quiet, but it was not passive. It was a life of deep listening. A life shaped by surrender.

Blessed Marie-Rose Durocher, a young woman from 19th-century Québec, chose a very different path. In an age when education was denied to most girls, she founded the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary, opening schools where knowledge and faith could grow side by side. Her health was frail. Her opposition was fierce. But she saw the injustice and chose to act—not later, not when it was easy, but at once.

Between the cloistered stillness of Bruno and the classroom energy of Marie-Rose lies the full stretch of Christian love: attentive to God, and active for others.

Ignatius would invite us to step into the Gospel story. To close our eyes and see the road to Jericho. Who are you? The one in the ditch? The one who walks past? The one who stops? What do you feel as you approach the wounded? What does God say to you in that moment of pause?

And we must also enter Jonah's story. Are there places, people, or callings we are running from? Where has God been asking us to go—not to punish, but to proclaim mercy?

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Perhaps the great question for us today is this: Will we stop running from mercy? And will we stop long enough to offer it?

Let me leave you with three questions, drawn from the Spiritual Exercises, to guide your prayer and practice this week:

- When have I resisted God's call because it led me somewhere uncomfortable, inconvenient, or unchosen?
- Where do I need to be interrupted—like Jonah, like the Samaritan—so that mercy can take root in my life?
- Who is the neighbour God is inviting me to see not as a problem to solve, but as a person to love?

May we, like Jonah, allow grace to pull us out of our depths.
May we, like the Samaritan, cross the road and bind the wounds.
And may we, like Bruno and Marie-Rose, say yes to God in the way only we can —fully, freely, and without fear.

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.