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Saturday of the 27th Week in Ordinary Time

Date: Saturday, October 11, 2025 | **Season:** Ordinary Time after Easter | **Year:** C
First Reading: Joel 4:12–21
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 97:1–2, 5–6, 11–12 | **Response:** Psalm 97:12a
Gospel Acclamation: Luke 11:28
Gospel Reading: Luke 11:27–28
Preached at: the Chapel of Emmaus House **in the** Archdiocese of Harare, Zimbabwe**.**

Today's readings bring us to the valley of decision — that moment in life when we must listen deeply to God and decide whether we will walk in his ways or our own.

Dear friends in Christ,

In our first reading today from the prophet Joel, we are taken into a dramatic picture. God calls the nations to gather in the Valley of Jehoshaphat, a name that means "the Lord judges." But this is not just about ancient history. This is about a moment of decision—a time when truth is revealed, and we are asked to choose where we stand. It's not only about them, back then. It's about us, right now.

The nations are told to turn their farming tools into weapons. It's a tragic reversal of peace. They are preparing for battle, not understanding that they are walking straight into God's judgement. Joel uses strong images: a harvest ready for reaping, a winepress overflowing. The message is clear—the time has come to separate what is good from what is not. The sun and moon go dark. The stars stop shining. God roars like a lion from Jerusalem. The earth shakes.

But even in the middle of all this shaking, there is a promise. God will be a refuge for his people. He will live with them, and their land will be full again—grapes on the vine, milk on the hills, rivers flowing with water. For a country like ours, where the land is often dry and the people carry heavy burdens, this image speaks powerfully. It is God's promise that things will not always be as they are now. Justice will come. Life will return. Dignity will be restored.

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And we believe, as Christians, that this promise is fulfilled in Christ. The judgment spoken of in Joel finds its deepest meaning on the Cross, where justice and mercy meet. Christ is the One who enters the valley in our place, takes on our brokenness, and opens the way to new life.

Psalm 97 reminds us that God's justice is not something to be feared if we walk with him. His throne is built on righteousness. Yes, the clouds and darkness may hide him at times, but his light breaks through. For those who love him, that light rises like dawn. It may take time, but it will come. Joy belongs to the just—not because life is easy, but because God is faithful.

Then we come to a short but meaningful moment in the Gospel of Luke. A woman in the crowd calls out in admiration: "Blessed is the womb that bore you!" She means it as praise for Jesus and for Mary. But Jesus turns her attention to something deeper: "Blessed rather are those who hear the Word of God and keep it." He's not rejecting Mary—far from it. In fact, he is showing us why Mary is truly blessed. Not just because she gave birth to Jesus, but because she heard God's Word and lived it every day.

Mary said yes to God with her whole life. At the Annunciation, at Bethlehem, at Cana, and at the Cross—she kept God's Word in her heart and acted on it. She is the first and best disciple. And we are called to follow her example. We remember this especially today as we give thanks for the life and witness of Saint John XXIII, a pope of great gentleness and vision. In convoking Vatican II, he opened the windows of the Church so the fresh air of the Holy Spirit could blow through. Like Mary, he listened to God's Word and responded with faith.

St Ignatius of Loyola invites us to pray not just with words, but with our imagination. You might picture yourself in that valley Joel spoke of. You're standing with many others. The air is still. You can feel the tension. And God speaks—not to crush you, but to invite you. Will you listen? Will you live his Word? Will you follow the path of peace, even when others choose violence?

This valley of decision is not only a vision from the past or the future. It's here, now. For many in Zimbabwe today, it's the choice between despair and hope, silence and courage, selfishness and service. It's the choice to walk with God, even when the way is hard.

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Jesus says the real blessing is not in status or power, but in hearing and doing God's Word. This is where justice begins—not in speeches, but in small acts of love, honesty, and mercy. For example, caring for an elderly neighbour. Helping a student who cannot afford transport. Refusing to take part in corruption. These are not small in God's eyes. They are the way his Word takes root in our lives.

And this is what we bring to the altar. The Eucharist we are about to receive is not just something to admire. It is Christ himself, who speaks to us again: "Will you hear my Word and keep it?" Let us answer with our lives.

So I invite you now to reflect:

- What is the valley of decision in my life today? Where is God asking me to choose?
- Am I really listening to God's Word—and keeping it, not just in my mind, but in my daily life?
- How can I be a source of hope and justice to someone around me who is still walking through a dry and weary land?

Let us choose, then, to be listeners of the Word—and doers of it. Let us bring our decision to this Eucharist, and let our yes, like Mary's, change the world, beginning with our own hearts.

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.