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Memorial of St Teresa of Jesus, virgin and doctor of the Church

Date: Wednesday, October 15, 2025 | **Season:** Ordinary Time after Easter | **Year:** C
First Reading: Romans 2:1–11
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 62:2–3, 6–7, 9 | **Response:** Psalm 62:13b
Gospel Acclamation: John 10:27
Gospel Reading: Luke 11:42–46
Preached at: the Chapel of Emmaus House **in the** Archdiocese of Harare, Zimbabwe**.**

The readings today are about the God who looks at the heart, and the danger of living our faith only on the surface.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, our first reading from Saint Paul's Letter to the Romans reminds us that God shows no partiality. To feel the full force of Paul's words, we must remember that Chapter 2 flows straight from Chapter 1—the break between them is artificial. Paul has just condemned the Gentiles for ignoring the moral law written on their hearts. His Jewish listeners would have nodded in agreement, pleased to see the pagans rebuked. Then, without pausing, Paul turns the mirror on them: "You, who judge others, do you not do the same things yourself?"

It is a brilliant reversal. Paul exposes religious pride—the ease with which we judge others while excusing ourselves. In Rome, this had become a real division. Years before, the Emperor Claudius had expelled the Jews after riots in the synagogues, likely over disputes about Jesus. When they returned, they found a Gentile-led Church that had grown in their absence. Suspicion simmered on both sides. Paul writes to heal that wound. Jew and Gentile alike stand before God not as rivals, but as children. His judgement is impartial; His mercy universal. God's "wrath" is not rage, but love grieved by indifference. His kindness, says Paul, is meant to lead us to repentance.

Psalm 62 responds to that call: "My soul rests in God alone." The psalmist teaches us the secret of peace—trust. True rest comes not from pride or privilege but from letting God see and heal the heart.

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That same peace shines in Saint Teresa of Ávila, whose feast we keep today. Sixteenth-century Spain sparkled with wealth and influence, but Teresa saw that spiritual life had grown shallow. Convents were comfortable; prayer was routine. After years of inner struggle, she discovered that God was not far away but living within her soul. That discovery set her ablaze. She reformed the Carmelite Order, founded small, joyful communities rooted in prayer, simplicity, and love, and taught that friendship with Christ is the wellspring of every renewal. She was sharp, humorous, deeply human—"God preserve us from stupid nuns," she once said, because holiness, she knew, needs both heart and sense. The Church later named her the first woman Doctor of the Church, recognising that her words had changed not only her own Order, but the whole understanding of prayer.

And in one quiet detail of history, her life brushed against the turning of time itself. She died on the night of 4 October 1582, just as the new Gregorian calendar came into force. Ten days were dropped from that month; the very next day was 15 October—the day we now keep as her feast. Even as the world's calendar shifted, she stepped into eternity.

The Gospel shows Jesus calling others to that same inner reform. He rebukes those who tithe their herbs but forget justice and love, who turn devotion into display and religion into a burden. Luke calls them "lawyers" because they built fences around the Law—adding rule upon rule until mercy was lost. Jesus does not destroy the Law; He restores its heart.

We too can slip into that pattern—measuring others, defending appearances, forgetting compassion. Here in Zimbabwe, where life already presses hard on so many shoulders, the Gospel calls us not to add to people's burdens but to lighten them: with fairness, with honesty, with mercy.

Let us pause for a moment of Ignatian prayer. Imagine Jesus sitting across from you. His eyes are clear and kind. Hear Him say, "You are worried about many things; only one thing is needed—love that flows from the heart." Let Him lift from you one burden you no longer need to carry—fear, resentment, or self-blame. Let it go. Then ask for the grace to see others with His eyes and serve them with His heart.

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Teresa said that God walks among the pots and pans. Holiness is not an escape from daily life; it is faithfulness in the midst of it—quiet, steady, transforming. Reform begins not in others but in us. When the soul turns back to God, even time itself begins to move differently. What once felt lost or wasted can become holy ground. The Lord can make up for lost days, just as history made space for Teresa's new dawn.

So today, let us ask her to teach us how to pray simply, love deeply, and serve joyfully—so that our faith may be deep and not decorative, merciful and not measured.

For reflection:

- What burden is Jesus asking me to lay down so I can walk freely in His mercy?
- Whose load can I lighten today through fairness, patience, or compassion?
- How can I, like Teresa, let prayer reshape my heart and renew my way of seeing others?

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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.