



Thursday of the 29th Week in Ordinary Time



Date: Thursday, October 23, 2025 | **Season:** Ordinary Time after Easter | **Year:** C

First Reading: Romans 6:19–23

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 1:1–4, 6 | **Response:** Psalm 40:5

Gospel Acclamation: Philippians 3:8–9

Gospel Reading: Luke 12:49–53

Preached at: the Chapel of Emmaus House in the Archdiocese of Harare, Zimbabwe.

Have you ever watched a child gaze at a candle flame? That small light dances in the dark. For a moment, everything grows still. One tiny flame — yet the shadows draw back. Philosophers and saints alike remind us that even one light can change the night. Saint Augustine wrote that a single candle is enough to push back the darkness, because light has a strength that darkness cannot defeat. The readings today speak of that same light — the fire of God's love that transforms, purifies, and sets us free.

Saint Paul, in his letter to the Romans, speaks to a world that knew slavery. In the Roman Empire, some historians say nearly one in three people were enslaved — men and women without rights, treated as property. Into that harsh reality, Paul speaks of another kind of slavery: the slavery of sin. “You who were once slaves to sin,” he says, “have become slaves to righteousness.” His point is not to glorify bondage, but to reveal what real freedom means. True freedom is not doing whatever we please, but belonging wholly to God. In Christ, we are set free — free to love, to serve, to do good without fear.

We see that freedom quietly at work among us.

In those who choose service over comfort.

In those who speak truth though it costs them.

In those who forgive instead of hardening their hearts.

Each time love wins over fear, the fire of God's freedom burns a little brighter.

The psalm today gives us a picture to hold on to: “The one who delights in the law of the Lord is like a tree planted by streams of water.” Even in drought, the tree stands firm. It doesn’t depend on rain; it draws life from deep roots. When our lives are rooted in God’s Word, our hope doesn’t dry up when the world grows hard. We keep bearing fruit — patience, honesty, kindness, peace.

Then Jesus speaks those unsettling words: “I came to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!” His fire is not destruction, but transformation — the fire of the Holy Spirit. From the burning bush before Moses to the tongues of flame at Pentecost, fire has always been the sign of God’s presence. The Spirit’s fire warms, purifies, and gives light. It burns away fear and selfishness, until only love remains.

But that fire also divides, because truth calls for choice. The peace of Christ is not the peace of pretending everything is fine. It is the peace that comes after purification — the peace of a heart made clean by love.

Let’s take a quiet moment to imagine.

Picture a small fire before you — steady and bright.

In its light, see your life: your hopes, your habits, your fears, your gifts.

Now hear Jesus say, “I came to bring fire to the earth.”

What needs to be refined in you? What must be burned away so that His love can shine more freely?

Saint John of Capistrano, whom we remember today, was a man set ablaze by that same divine fire. Born a lawyer in Italy, he turned from public office to the Franciscan life and became one of the great reforming preachers of his age. His words stirred hearts across Europe, calling people back to the Gospel with courage and clarity. In his later years, when the Ottoman armies threatened Belgrade, the seventy-year-old friar stood with the defenders, rallying them not with weapons but with prayer and faith. The city was saved, yet John soon fell ill with the plague and died still ministering to the wounded. His life shows us what it means to let the love of Christ burn right to the end — a faith that speaks truth, serves the suffering, and stands firm when fear would rather flee.

And centuries later, another man caught that same flame — Saint Ignatius of Loyola. Before sending his companions out into the world, Ignatius told them, “Go, set the world on fire.” He wasn’t speaking of destruction, but of passion —

the burning love of Christ that changes everything it touches. That is the fire Jesus longs to see in us: the fire that lights minds with truth, hearts with compassion, and hands with courage to act.

When that fire burns within us, it becomes mercy in motion and justice alive. It refuses to accept a world where some are left in darkness or despair. It believes that the image of God still burns, however faintly, in every person — rich or poor, forgotten or powerful. The flame of divine dignity is in us all.

So as we come to the altar today, let us ask the Lord to rekindle that fire in us — the fire that burned in Paul and in John of Capistrano, in Ignatius and in all who dared to love boldly.

And as we go out again into the world, perhaps we can hold these questions close:

- Where in my life am I still not free in Christ?
- What must the fire of His love burn away in me?
- And how can I, in my small corner, help to set the world on fire with His love?

Let us pray.

Lord Jesus, set our hearts on fire with your Spirit.

Burn away our fear, our pride, our indifference.

Teach us to love, to serve, to see your light in every person.

May we, with Ignatius and John of Capistrano,

carry your flame into the world. Amen.

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