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Saturday of the 29th Week in Ordinary Time

Date: Saturday, October 25, 2025 | **Season:** Ordinary Time after Easter | **Year:** C
First Reading: Romans 8:1–11
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 24:1–4b, 5–6 | **Response:** Psalm 24:6
Gospel Acclamation: Ezekiel 33:11
Gospel Reading: Luke 13:1–9
Preached at: the Chapel of Emmaus House **in the** Archdiocese of Harare, Zimbabwe**.**

The vineyard is dry. A single fig tree stands in the dust—its leaves curled, its branches bare. Yet the gardener kneels beside it, loosening the soil and whispering, "Give it one more year." That image from today's Gospel captures everything the Scriptures are saying to us this morning. God gives time. The Spirit gives life. And we are called to bear fruit while there is still time.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, Saint Paul tells us in his Letter to the Romans, "There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." What a promise that is. These are not words of cold doctrine—they are words of freedom. They tell us that we are justified, made right with God, not by what we have done, but by what God has done for us. The "law of the Spirit of life" has set us free from the "law of sin and death." This doesn't mean we can live carelessly. It means that Christ has taken the burden from our shoulders, not to excuse us, but to lift us up—to make us new, to give us peace and responsibility.

Paul says there are two ways to live. One is according to the flesh—that is, living for ourselves, chasing power, control, or comfort. The other is according to the Spirit—living with humility, trust, and openness to God. Every day we make that choice. The Spirit doesn't free us from discipline or effort; it frees us from fear and guilt. It gives us the courage to do what is right, even when it costs us.

And here in Zimbabwe, where so many live with uncertainty, Paul's words come alive. The same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead still breathes in us. That Spirit can raise our weary hearts, our broken families, and our struggling communities. When we allow the Spirit to shape our decisions, our workplaces, our homes, then faith becomes real.

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So how do we start?

- Be honest in our work, even when dishonesty looks easier.
- Care for those who are struggling or alone.
- Speak the truth—but with kindness and courage.

The Psalm gives us another image. It says, “Who shall climb the mountain of the Lord? The one with clean hands and a pure heart.” In ancient times, pilgrims would wash their hands before entering the Temple, but the psalmist knew that true cleansing goes deeper. “Clean hands” mean right actions; “pure hearts” mean right intentions. Both matter.

This ties beautifully to the Gospel. Jesus calls us not only to repent in our hearts but also to live that repentance in our actions. In our country, where corruption and dishonesty often tempt us, “clean hands” mean something very concrete. It means doing what is right with money that is not ours. It means transparency in leadership and fairness in business. It means choosing integrity, even when it costs something.

Now look again at the Gospel. People come to Jesus with tragic news—some Galileans slaughtered by Pilate, others crushed when a tower fell. The crowd wants explanations. They want to know whose sin caused it. But Jesus refuses to play that game. He doesn’t explain tragedy. Instead, He turns the question around: “Unless you repent, you will all perish as they did.” He is not threatening; He is inviting. He reminds us that life is fragile, and conversion cannot wait.

And then comes the parable of the fig tree. The owner wants to cut it down—it has produced nothing. But the gardener pleads, “Give it one more year. I’ll dig around it and put manure on it.” What a picture of God that is! Patient. Gentle. Persistent. God doesn’t ignore our lack of fruit; He doesn’t give up on us. He rolls up His sleeves and works the hard soil of our hearts. He gives us another chance.

Imagine that gardener in prayer. See Him kneeling in the dirt beside your own heart. He loosens the hard earth, waters the roots, and whispers hope over you. God’s patience isn’t endless waiting—it’s mercy that calls us to grow. He wants fruit—the fruit of the Holy Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. These are the marks of a heart alive in the Spirit.

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Saint Augustine once said that the gardener also stands for those who pray for others—the saints, the faithful, those who don't give up on the lost. We too are called to be gardeners of hope: to pray for those who have fallen away, to encourage the discouraged, to bring new life where there is barrenness.

And this parable speaks to us as a nation too. Zimbabwe is like that fig tree—tired, weathered, yet still tended by God. The Lord has not abandoned us. He is still digging around our roots, still feeding our soil, still giving us another year of grace. The same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead can breathe life into this land—into our politics, our homes, our Church—if we let Him. But He also asks us to do our part.

We can live this out by:

- Working for peace where there is division.
- Refusing to take part in gossip or corruption.
- Praying and acting for the good of our communities.

The message is simple but urgent. God's mercy gives us time—but not time to waste. The Spirit has set us free—not to sit still, but to bear fruit. The Lord is tending the soil around us. He believes in us. Let's not let that grace go unused.

Let us pray:
Lord Jesus, Gardener of our hearts,
thank You for Your mercy that gives us another chance.
Cleanse our hands, purify our hearts,
and fill us with Your Spirit,
so that we may bear the fruits of love, joy, and peace.
Renew our nation, our Church, and our lives. Amen.

And as we reflect this morning, let's ask ourselves:

- Where in my life is God patiently waiting for me to change?
- What fruit of the Spirit do I need to grow in most right now?
- How can I help others around me grow in faith and hope this week?

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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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