Fr Matthew Charlesworth, SJ
https://sj.mcharlesworth.fr/

Friday of the 31st Week in Ordinary Time

Date: Friday, November 7, 2025 | **Season:** Ordinary Time after Easter | **Year:** C
First Reading: Romans 15:14–21
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 98:1–4 | **Response:** Psalm 98:2b
Gospel Reading: Luke 16:1–8
Preached at: the Chapel of Emmaus House **in the** Archdiocese of Harare, Zimbabwe**.**

Our readings today offer us not a manual, but a mirror: a mirror for how we listen, how we discern, and how we act—not for ourselves, but always for others, and always for the greater glory of God.

In Paul's voice in the Letter to the Romans, we hear a man near the end of a long, uneven road. He looks back, not to tally his own accomplishments, but to marvel at how grace has done the work. "Through Christ Jesus," he says, "I can be proud of my service to God"—not in himself, but in Christ working through him. There is no triumphalism in Paul. Only gratitude, and a kind of seasoned humility. He knows now that the Gospel does not travel on the back of brilliance or boldness alone, but through the slow work of trust, companionship, and love that listens first and speaks second.

Paul doesn't speak to the Roman church as a strategist or superior, but as a brother among many. He acknowledges their goodness, their gifts, their capacity to teach one another. He doesn't dominate. He draws them into the shared labour of the Gospel. That spirit—deeply synodal, deeply Ignatian—reminds us of our own calling: not to impose, but to walk with; not to have all the answers, but to ask the better questions; not to do the work alone, but to find where Christ is already at work in others.

We are not strangers to this. Jesuit life is companionship lived in mission. It is learning how to be apostles together. It is waking up again and again to the realisation that our life is not ours alone—that our imagination, our failures, our fidelity, even our exhaustion—are part of something far greater than we can see. Paul's joy is not personal success; it is seeing Christ alive in the people he was

CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 · https://sj.mcharlesworth.fr/homilies/2025-11nov-07-yc-ot-31/

sent to serve. And perhaps that is the heart of our own joy, too—when a retreatant finds stillness; when a student finds his voice; when a brother, tired and quietly faithful, shows us the face of Christ in the ordinary.

The psalm today breaks open that joy with song: "Sing a new song to the Lord, for he has done marvellous deeds." Not the old song. Not the weary script of cynicism. But something new. In Zimbabwe today, where the weight of hardship presses heavy, this new song often sounds like silence. But it is still a song. It lives in the classroom where a teacher keeps showing up. It lives in the simple rhythm of community prayer. It lives in the quiet work of those who refuse to let mercy grow cold.

To sing a new song is to insist on hope. It is to become poets of possibility in places others have written off. The world may ask us for results. The Gospel asks us for presence. And that presence—if it is to be real—must be renewed. It must be nourished by grace, reimagined in prayer, and strengthened by companionship.

Then Jesus tells a story. A steward, caught in crisis, turns clever. He reduces debts, perhaps hoping to salvage his dignity, perhaps hoping to secure a welcome when all else fails. His master commends him—not for dishonesty, but for his boldness, his creativity, his capacity to act when it matters. Jesus is not asking us to be cunning. But he is asking us to be courageous and awake. If those who chase profit can be this resourceful, how much more should the children of the Kingdom be?

This Gospel cuts close to the bone. In our ministries, our houses, our planning, our discernment—we are stewards. And often, we're tired stewards. The needs are many, the resources stretched, the way ahead unclear. But Jesus is asking: are you willing to act? Are you willing to risk new ways of serving, new ways of accompanying, new ways of loving? This is not about flashy innovation. It's about the depth of imagination rooted in faith. It's about discernment—not only personal, but shared. That careful, prayerful listening together that allows us to see beyond the obvious and to choose what leads most deeply into life.

The turning point for the steward comes when he faces himself. "I'm not strong enough to dig. I'm ashamed to beg." He names his limits. And that honesty—however painful—becomes the beginning of wisdom. We know this movement.

CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 · https://sj.mcharlesworth.fr/homilies/2025-11nov-07-yc-ot-31/

It is the Examen. It is the long, loving look at the real. It is when we sit in silence before the cross, and realise we cannot do this alone. It is not weakness. It is grace. Because when we know what we are not, we begin to discover who God is—and who we are together.

The Church, in this synodal moment, is asking for that same honesty. Not new structures for their own sake, but a renewed way of listening. Not efficiency, but fidelity. Not answers, but discernment. To speak with the courage of Paul. To serve with the humility of Jesus. To listen, like Ignatius, for the movements of the Spirit—within and beyond our walls.

So we return to that quiet line: "Whoever is faithful in little things will be faithful in great." The small conversations. The unglamorous duties. The long meetings that don't seem to go anywhere. The midnight calls. The classes. The sick visits. The laughter over tea. The hidden acts of love. These are the currency of the Kingdom. These are how we steward the grace we have received.

Let us then pray not for cleverness, but for wisdom. Not for outcomes, but for faithfulness. Not for applause, but for the grace to serve well and serve together.

And perhaps this morning, as we walk our own small portion of the road, we might each ask:

- Where is God inviting us to listen more deeply—in our community, and in those we are sent to serve?
- What gifts among us are lying dormant, waiting to be used more boldly for the good of others?
- In what small, unnoticed ways is our shared life already singing God's new song—a quiet, insistent song of hope?

May we have the ears to hear it, the courage to join it, and the joy to keep singing, even in the dark.

Amen.

Source: https://sj.mcharlesworth.fr/homilies/2025-11nov-07-yc-ot-31/

This homily is shared for personal and pastoral use. Please attribute the author and do not alter the meaning when quoting. If you wish this homily to be translated - there is an option on the website which will allow you to translate it into the language of your choice.

Licenced under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0) license.

The author does not speak for the Society of Jesus or for the Catholic Church.

Receive Fr Matthew Charlesworth's Homilies on
WhatsApp

Receive Fr Matthew Charlesworth's Homilies on
Telegram

Receive Fr Matthew Charlesworth's Homilies on
Signal

Scan for Website on
Clearnet

Scan for Onion Mirror
via TOR

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.

CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 · https://sj.mcharlesworth.fr/homilies/2025-11nov-07-yc-ot-31/