Fr Matthew Charlesworth, SJ
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33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Date: Sunday, November 16, 2025 | **Season:** Ordinary Time after Easter | **Year:** C
First Reading: Malachi 3:19–20a
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 98:5–9 | **Response:** Psalm 98:9
Second Reading: 2 Thessalonians 3:7–12
Gospel Acclamation: Luke 21:28
Gospel Reading: Luke 21:5–19
Preached at: The Jesuit Institute **in the** Archdiocese of Johannesburg, South Africa**.**

Dear friends in Christ, today we hold a simple truth before us: when everything we trust begins to tremble, God teaches us how to stand, and how to help others stand with us.

Our first reading from the prophet Malachi speaks with the clarity of a bright, hard morning. He describes a day that burns like an oven, when injustice is exposed and arrogance loses its shine. Yet the same prophet promises that the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings. Fire and light, judgement and healing rise together. Malachi's name means "my messenger", and he speaks to a people discouraged by corruption and spiritual fatigue. His message is not fear but hope. Justice is not a distant horizon. It is a dawn that warms as it purifies.

The psalm continues this song of hope. Psalm 98 invites the rivers to clap and the mountains to shout as the Lord comes to rule with fairness. When justice enters the world, creation itself finds its voice. In South Africa today, where the earth carries wounds from mines, drought, pollution and the slow violence of poverty, the image of singing hills becomes a quiet pledge: if the land can hope, so can we.

Now hold that hope while we listen to Paul's words to the Thessalonians. Some in that early community were so convinced the end was imminent that they had stopped working, waiting for God to intervene. Paul meets this with gentle firmness. He reminds them of how he laboured with his own hands, refusing to be a burden. His point is simple: faith is not passive speculation. It is active fidelity. It is a shared effort. It is the quiet, steady work that builds community. In a

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country where unemployment weighs heavily on so many households and where despair can hollow out the spirit, Paul reminds us that Christian hope does not sit still. It stands up. It works. It shares the load.

And then in the Gospel from Luke, Jesus is standing in the Temple near the end of his public life. Imagine the scene with Ignatian care. Feel the warmth of the stones. Hear the murmur of pilgrims. See the enormous white blocks rising like a fortress of faith. To the people gathered around Jesus, the Temple was the soul of their world, the centre of heaven and earth. It was meant to last forever, just as many believe St Peter's in Rome should last forever.

But Jesus looks at it and speaks of its fall. His words must have seemed shocking, even blasphemous. Yet history records their truth. Forty years later, after a rebellion, Rome besieged Jerusalem. The Temple was burned and torn down. The Holy of Holies was ransacked, its vessels paraded through Rome in triumph. On Titus' arch those trophies are still carved. Only the Western Wall remains, a testament of endurance. The unimaginable happened, and many believed the world was ending.

Jesus then speaks of false messiahs, wars, earthquakes, famines, plagues and persecution. These signs appear in every age, including our own. Yet he insists on one command: do not be afraid. He teaches that these upheavals are not signals of the end but features of the human story. Even persecution, he says, is not a cosmic countdown but part of the Christian path. Whenever the Gospel is lived with sincerity, some will resist it. Love unsettles the world.

On this World Day of the Poor, the Church turns her eyes to those whom the world too easily overlooks. As Pope Leo XIV writes in his message for this day, the poor are "our beloved brothers and sisters, for by their lives, their words and their wisdom they put us in contact with the truth of the Gospel." He reminds us that the poorest person is never empty-handed, for the poor reveal the God who is "the God of hope" and who draws near through trust rather than possession. The Pope also speaks with clarity about justice, saying that our care for the poor is "a matter of justice before a question of charity", echoing Paul's labour of hope in the Second Letter to the Thessalonians.

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And in this Jubilee Year of 2025, as the Church prepares to close the Holy Door and bring this graced season to completion, the invitation becomes even more urgent. The Jubilee teaches us that mercy is not an event we visit but a path we walk. As the Holy Door begins to close, another door must open in us: the door of companionship, where we walk with the poor not as benefactors but as fellow pilgrims. In our South African communities, where many shoulder the weight of unemployment, fragile services and rising costs, this Day becomes more than a reminder. It becomes a call to shared endurance, shared dignity and shared hope, so that the sun of righteousness may rise for all.

A single image threads through Malachi, the psalm, Paul and Luke: the contrast between what seems permanent and what truly endures. The Temple looked eternal. The hills seem timeless. Our own plans often feel secure. But they are not. What endures is fidelity. What endures is love. What endures is the steady heart that faces each day with Christ.

This is also the wisdom of the Spiritual Exercises. Ignatius invites us to hold our lives lightly and lovingly. To notice where fear grips us. To ask what the Lord is offering today, not tomorrow. The examen teaches us to stand before God with honest clarity: Where did I choose love? Where did I refuse it? Where did I cling to false security? Where did grace find space?

Jesus warns us not only against fear of the end but against the illusion that tomorrow is guaranteed. We can become like the rich man who built bigger barns, telling himself he had many years ahead. Yet life is not a possession. It is a gift. We are asked not to predict the future but to walk with Christ in the present.

So let us return to Malachi's sunrise. The sun of righteousness rises not only on the last day but on every day. Its light falls on the ruined Temple, on the singing hills, on Paul's workshop, on our own neighbourhoods and on our hearts. One rising sun. One rising hope.

Carry these questions into your prayer this week:

- Where am I holding on to stones that cannot last, and what is Jesus asking me to trust instead?
- How is God calling me to stand with those whose lives are shaken by poverty, fear or uncertainty, so that we can endure together?

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- How can my daily work and choices reflect not anxiety about tomorrow but faithful love in the present moment?

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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.