



Thursday of the 33rd Week in Ordinary Time



Date: Thursday, November 20, 2025 | **Season:** Ordinary Time after Easter | **Year:** C

First Reading: 1 Maccabees 2:15–29

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 50:1b–2, 5–6, 14–15 | **Response:** Psalm 50:23b

Gospel Acclamation: Psalm 95:8

Gospel Reading: Luke 19:41–44

Preached at: the Chapel of Xolile Keteyi House in the Archdiocese of Durban, South Africa.

The readings today are about standing at a doorway where a real choice must be made, a choice between the easy path of compromise and the harder path that leads to peace.

Dear friends in Christ, picture a simple doorway. Nothing remarkable. Yet every time you step through it, you choose the room you will inhabit. Scripture places us before such a doorway and asks us to notice our step.

Our first reading Maccabees takes us to Modein. Royal officers from the Seleucid empire arrive with orders: offer a pagan sacrifice and all will be well. Many had already given in. The pressure was real. The regime punished those who kept Jewish customs and rewarded those who abandoned them. Mattathias sees that one small act of surrender would begin to unmake his people. He refuses. Not loudly. Not with self-importance. Just with a clear sense that God's covenant is worth protecting.

The Maccabean story is not about seeking conflict. It is about resisting the quiet erosion of identity. Their name, often connected to a word meaning hammer, suggests steadiness rather than force. They remind us that fidelity usually starts in small, hidden decisions. This touches our own lives in Zimbabwe today. We know what it means to feel pressure to accept dishonesty as normal, to retreat into silence when a neighbour is being treated unjustly, to shrug at systems that forget the poor. Mattathias invites us to begin with one honest decision. Every community is held together by such people.

Psalm 50, which we pray today, reminds us that God is not looking for outward show. God wants thanksgiving that comes from truth, prayer linked to justice, worship that matches the way we live. The psalm calls the faithful to gather before God, not to impress God, but to be reminded of what matters. And we need that reminder. In a country where families struggle to meet basic needs, where young people work long hours just to keep studying, acts of fairness and kindness are not small. They are sacred. They are the kind of offerings Psalm 50 speaks of.

In Luke's Gospel, Jesus approaches Jerusalem and weeps. He weeps because a city meant for peace cannot recognise the peace being set before it. His tears are not about punishment. They are about loss. Jesus sees how violence, pride, and fear will tear the city apart. He sees what happens when people refuse God's way: communities weaken, trust collapses, and ordinary people suffer. We do not need to look far to understand this. We know it from our own streets, our own homes, our own national story.

There is an old rabbinic image of God calling gently to the people: return to me, and I will return to you. Jesus stands in that tradition. His tears are the tears of someone who wants healing, not destruction. They are the tears of someone who stands at the doorway with us and asks us to see what lies on either side.

Just as Jesus wept over Jerusalem, it is hard not to think of the Holy Land today, especially the devastation in Gaza. Entire families have been uprooted, homes levelled, and ordinary people caught between powers far beyond their control. And we must also acknowledge the heartbreak on all sides, including the deep fear and grief endured by Israeli families who long for safety and for the return of those they love. The Church, through the Pope's repeated appeals, has urged all parties toward a ceasefire, humanitarian corridors, and dialogue that protects both Palestinians and Israelis. To stand with Gaza in its suffering is not to deny the pain elsewhere; it is to honour the dignity of every human life and to refuse to allow any people to be reduced to targets or symbols. Today's readings—Mattathias's steady refusal to cooperate with injustice, the psalm's link between worship and justice, and Jesus's tears over a city that could not find the path of peace—invite us to pray, to mourn, and to speak for the innocent wherever they live. They call us to seek a peace that holds all people in its light.

Ignatian spirituality invites us to step into this scene. So if you wish, imagine yourself standing next to Jesus on the hill. Feel the ground under you. Look at the city spread out below. Listen to him breathe. Ask quietly, Lord, when you look at my life, what are the things that make for peace that I am missing? Allow the silence to speak.

Mattathias shows the courage of a clear choice. The psalm shows the honesty of a sincere heart. Jesus shows the sorrow and hope of God's love. Together, they bring us back to the doorway. The step we take today shapes the room we enter tomorrow.

So may we ask God to make our steps steady. May we choose truth, peace, and compassion in the small places where decisions are made. And may our choices help build a kinder and more just South Africa.

Three questions for reflection:

- Where in my life am I turning away from the peace that Jesus is offering?
- What simple, honest action can I take this week that strengthens trust and helps someone who is carrying a heavy load?
- When I imagine the city of my life, what doorway is Jesus inviting me to step through with courage and hope?

Source: <https://sj.mcharlesworth.fr/homilies/2025-11nov-20-yc-ot-33/>

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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.

