



Seventh Day in the Octave of Christmas



Date: Wednesday, December 31, 2025 | **Season:** Christmas | **Year:** A

First Reading: 1 John 2:18–21

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 96:1–2, 11–13 | **Response:** Psalm 96:11a

Gospel Acclamation: John 1:14a, 12a

Gospel Reading: John 1:1–18

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

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, this is the last day of the year. Before we make plans for tomorrow, the Church asks us to listen again to the beginning of John’s Gospel, so that we can understand where our lives come from and where they are meant to go.

Many of us come to this day carrying mixed feelings. Some relief that the year is over. Some gratitude. Some regret. We remember conversations that went badly, hopes that did not work out, people we lost, chances we missed. We also remember moments of grace we did not expect. The readings today do not ask us to judge the year as a success or a failure. They ask something more honest. They ask us to look at the year in the light of Christ.

The first reading, from the First Letter of John speaks with urgency. “Children, it is the last hour.” John is not trying to frighten anyone. In the Bible, the “last hour” is not about the end of the world. It is about the moment when truth matters, when we must decide who we trust and who we follow. John is worried because his community is being pulled apart by voices that sound confident but are not faithful. Some are twisting the truth about Jesus. Some are offering a version of faith that is easier, cleaner, less demanding.

John reminds them of something simple. You have been anointed. You already know the truth. In the Jewish world, anointing was for kings and priests, people set apart for God’s work. John says that mark now rests on ordinary believers. In other words, you are not helpless. You are not empty. You have been given what you need.

That is a hard word for the end of the year. We live surrounded by loud voices, political, religious, and social. Some promise quick solutions. Some trade in fear. Some offer belonging at the cost of honesty. In Zimbabwe today, many people are tired of being misled, tired of words that sound good but change nothing. John asks us to be clear. What voices shaped my year. Which ones drew me closer to the truth, and which ones quietly pulled me away from it.

The psalm gives us a wider view. “Let the heavens rejoice and the earth be glad.” In the Bible, creation rejoices because God is coming to judge the earth. That word “judge” can make us uneasy, but here it means something hopeful. God comes to set things right. God comes to defend those who have been ignored. God comes to restore balance where life has been bent out of shape.

When people struggle to put food on the table, when young graduates cannot find work, when the vulnerable are asked to wait while others prosper, offering praise can feel strange. Yet the psalm insists that praise is an act of trust. To sing is to say that injustice is not permanent. To praise is to believe that God has not abandoned the earth He made.

Then the beginning of the Gospel of John is proclaimed. Many of us know these words by heart, but today we hear them at the end of the year, not the beginning. “In the beginning was the Word.” John starts where Genesis starts, but he goes even deeper. Before creation, before history, before our mistakes and our efforts, there was relationship. The Word was with God, and the Word was God.

In Jewish faith, God creates by speaking. God’s Word is not information. It is action. John tells us that this Word did not stay distant. The Word became flesh and lived among us. Literally, he pitched his tent among us. God chose to dwell in ordinary life, in work and fatigue, in joy and rejection.

Ignatius would ask us to pause and imagine it. Picture the first light of the universe, the long forming of stars and earth, the slow arrival of human life. All of it held in God’s patience. Then see the Word step into that same world, into dust and noise and struggle, into crowded homes and ordinary work, into lives marked by injustice and hope. God does not enter at a safe distance. He stays. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness does not overcome it.

John says that the Word made flesh was full of grace and truth, and he never lets us pull those two apart. I was struck by this watching *Truth and Treason*, a film set in Nazi Germany, where a young believer, Helmuth Hübener, speaks of Jesus as someone who stood up without violence, who spoke when silence would have been safer, and who accepted the cost of telling the truth. He fought not with swords, but with words. That is grace and truth lived, not admired. And this matters as one year ends and another begins. Many of us can see clearly now where we stayed quiet when we should have spoken, where we went along to get along, where fear shaped our choices more than faith. Grace is not God pretending that did not happen. Grace is God giving us another year. Another chance to speak more honestly, to stand more calmly, to act more justly. Truth shows us where we failed. Grace gives us the courage to begin again, not by forgetting the past, but by learning from it.

Today the Church also remembers Saint Sylvester, who was pope during one of the greatest turning points in Christian history. He lived at the time of Constantine, when the Church moved from persecution into public life, from hiding places into basilicas, from fear into a new and uncertain freedom. Sylvester did not rule an empire, and he did not command armies. Constantine did that. Sylvester's task was quieter and harder: to help the Church remain faithful while everything around it was changing. Power was now close. Influence was now possible. The temptation was real. Sylvester reminds us that not every revolution needs a hero on horseback. Sometimes what shapes the future is a Church that learns how to speak the truth without becoming the state, how to accept protection without losing its soul. His life teaches us that faithfulness, patiently lived, can guide even the largest changes without being swallowed by them.

So as this year ends, the Gospel does not ask us for perfect plans. It asks for honesty. Will we let Christ be the light by which we look at our lives. Will we allow the Word made flesh to shape how we speak, how we decide, how we treat those with less power than ourselves. In small communities, in families, in parishes, this is where the Word becomes flesh again.

The year ends tonight. The light remains. Tomorrow is unknown, but it is not empty. God has already entered it.

As we move into the New Year, take these questions into prayer.

- Where in this past year did I recognise Christ close to my life, and where did I push him to the edge.
- Which voices most shaped my choices, and how did they lead me either toward truth or away from it.
- As a new year begins, where is God inviting me to let his light guide one concrete decision, one relationship, one act of justice or mercy.

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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.