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Friday after Epiphany

Date: Friday, January 9, 2026 | **Season:** Christmas | **Year:** A
First Reading: 1 John 5:5–13
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 147:12–15, 19–20 | **Response:** Psalm 147:12a
Gospel Acclamation: Matthew 4:23
Gospel Reading: Luke 5:12–16
Preached at: the Chapel of Emerald Hill Children's Home **in the** Archdiocese of Harare, Zimbabwe**.**

Dear sisters in Christ, today's readings offer one clear call: believe the truth about Jesus, praise God for what he is already doing, and allow Christ to touch what we would rather keep hidden.

We begin with the First Letter of John. John is writing to a community that is tired, confused, and pulled in different directions. Some voices were claiming special knowledge. Others were questioning whether Jesus truly mattered for daily life. John answers them simply and firmly. Faith is not cleverness. Faith is not winning arguments. Faith is trusting that Jesus is the Son of God and living from that trust.

John speaks of testimony. God has testified to his Son through water and blood. Water washes and makes clean. Blood carries life and binds people together. Water reminds us of baptism, when we were washed and given a place among God's people. Blood points to the cross, where Jesus gave his life so that we could remain in that family. Together they say something very plain. God does not save us from a distance. God cleans us and gives us life by drawing close. John insists on something direct. Eternal life is not only promised for later. It is given now. You already have it, he says, if you remain in Christ. That is not meant to comfort us. It is meant to shape us. If God's life, given through water and blood, is already in us, then our choices, our words, our patience, and our mercy must begin to show it.

The psalm takes that faith and puts it into prayer. Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem. Praise is not pretending that life is easy. It is choosing to notice where God is still at work. The psalm speaks of gates made strong, children blessed, wheat

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provided. These are everyday things. Safety. Food. A future. This is what salvation often looks like on the ground. It restores the simple conditions that allow people to live together and to worship.

For a religious community, this matters. Praise is not only what we sing. It is how we keep praying when prayer feels dry, how we speak to one another when routine wears us down, how we stay faithful when our work seems small. In Southern Africa today, where many live with economic pressure, migration, and frustration with broken systems, this psalm reminds us that God has not stepped away. God is still strengthening what holds people together.

The Gospel from Luke brings everything into flesh and skin. A man with leprosy comes to Jesus. Luke says he is full of leprosy. This is complete exclusion. He is cut off from worship, family, work, and touch. He has lost not only his health but his voice and his place. He kneels and speaks simply. “Lord, if you choose, you can make me clean.” He places himself in Jesus’ hands.

Jesus responds with a choice that matters. He stretches out his hand and touches him. Before the healing, before any instruction, there is touch. This is water and blood made visible. Jesus does not pull back to protect himself. His holiness is not fragile. It does not withdraw. It moves toward what is broken and heals it.

That touch does more than cure a disease. It gives the man his life back. He can speak again in public. He can stand among others at prayer. He can belong. This is salvation happening now. Water cleans him. Life flows back into him. He is restored to worship and to shared life.

This is where the Gospel speaks to us. Mercy does not heal from far away. It draws close. It asks whether we trust that Christ’s life in us is strong enough to be spent for others. Healing always brings responsibility with it.

Jesus then sends the man to the priest. What has been healed must be recognised and lived within the community. Grace brings us back into shared life, with its duties and its care for others. After this, Jesus withdraws to pray. He does not separate prayer from action. One feeds the other.

This pattern matters for us. Faith received. Praise offered. Mercy lived. Prayer renewed. It is not dramatic. It is steady. In a world that values speed and attention, this Gospel shows the strength of staying close and faithful.

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So let us take these readings into our prayer this morning.

- Where in my life do I trust Christ but hesitate to let that trust shape my daily choices?
- Who or what do I keep at a distance, when the Gospel is asking me to come closer?
- How can my prayer this week lead me back into shared life with steadier faith and quieter love?

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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.