



Monday of the first week in Ordinary Time



Date: Monday, January 12, 2026 | **Season:** Christmas | **Year:** A

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 116:12–19 | **Response:** Psalm 116:17a

Gospel Acclamation: Mark 1:15

Gospel Reading: Mark 1:14–20

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

Help me write a homily for the Memorial of Monday of the first week in Ordinary Time, Year A, with the following readings:

First Reading 1 Samuel 1:1–8 Response Psalm 116:17a Psalm Psalm 116:12–19
Gospel Acclamation Mark 1:15 Gospel Mark 1:14–20

which should incorporate the following elements, and some of the ideas I mention at the end of the prompt, and should not include headings, and should be around 800 words:

Scripture Reflection:

Provide a deep reflection on each of the readings for the day (Old Testament, Psalm, and Gospel). Identify and explore the key themes of the readings - linking it to the overall theme of the Advent Season. Offer historical, cultural, and rabbinical insights where relevant, particularly focusing on any figures, concepts, or traditions that can illuminate the readings. Where it helps, explain the origin of a name or where an allusion to the event described occurs elsewhere in Scripture.

Briefly connect the themes of the readings to Catholic Social Teaching - without being too overt or distracting from the theme - particularly in relation to justice, the dignity of the human person, and care for the poor and marginalized, or any other concept in Catholic Social Teaching, without becoming repetitive or redundant. Include references to local issues in the area where the homily is being preached (e.g., South Africa in 2025). Do not mention the phrase “Catholic Social Teaching” explicitly, but allude to the teaching.

Rhetorical Style:

While sticking to the word limit, this is important. Emulate the rhetorical style of Josiah Bartlett on his best day, incorporating elegant and accessible language, that is hopeful, and inspirational. You can also include some of the style and substance of Pope Francis, or Winston Churchill, if it would make it more uplifting and inspiring. Build sentences with a rhythmic, flowing cadence, starting with thought-provoking statements and expanding on them, creating a natural progression of ideas, with imagery and examples drawn from a cultured/learned understanding of theology, philosophy, history, literature and psychology. Use an imaginative story or device if it helps, and try to link the overall theme or image raised in the beginning in the conclusion so that the finished product is well-conceived. Make excellent use of every rhetorical device, like alliteration, anaphora, antanaclasis, epistrophe, metaphor, parallel structure, and antithesis to make the message memorable and impactful, for greater rhetorical and poetic effect. Maintain moral clarity and conviction, communicating urgency and clarity while inspiring action without sounding too forceful, whilst still offering concrete hope and pastoral sensitivity. Do not preface each part with “And then comes the...”, whether it is the Gospel or First Reading or Psalm. Find a more elegant way to transition between the readings.

Faithful to Catholic Tradition, Yet Relevant Today:

Draw connections between the ancient texts and modern-day issues, inviting the congregation (who will be largely catholic religious, some married couples, and some young people attending university) to see the relevance of these Scriptures in their everyday lives, highlighting the echoes of Christian Experience, especially of an experience of the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius of Loyola. Provide a moral challenge: reflect on mercy, justice, love, humility, and service, and call the congregation to action, helping them see how the Gospel applies to their lives today.

Make sure that you avoid the following criticisms:

1. Overabundance of Abstract Language: Ensure that the connection between theology and practical application could be made more immediate and tangible.

2. Insufficient Narrative or Emotional Engagement: Ensure that there is a strong narrative thread or personal story to draw the congregation into the mystery Word of God more viscerally.
3. Limited Exploration of Ignatian Spirituality: Ensure that where possible Ignatian Spirituality (e.g. invitations to imaginative contemplation, the examen, recalling moments from the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius Loyola) could be expanded to invite deeper personal engagement with the Scriptures.
4. Underutilized Local Context: Ensure that the homily resonates with the lived experiences of the congregation.
5. Structure Could Be Sharpened: Ensure a clearer structure that builds to a powerful conclusion. A single unifying image or theme might help tie the reflections together more cohesively.
6. Structural Flow: Tie the readings together more cohesively, with a central unifying image or theme running through the homily. Avoid the homily feeling slightly segmented.
7. Narrative and Emotional Engagement: Use more vivid narrative elements to draw the congregation more emotionally into the story.
8. Ignatian Spirituality: Deepen the connection to Ignatian Spirituality by inviting the congregation to enter into imaginative contemplation.
9. Local Context and Catholic Social Teaching: While the homily touches on Catholic Social Teaching, particularly in relation to the marginalized and the poor, this section could be more specific. Integrate more detailed references to local struggles or injustices in Zimbabwe, making the application of Catholic Social Teaching more immediate and relevant to the congregation's context.
10. Pacing and Clarity of Conclusion: Ensure that the conclusion is very compelling.
11. Explicitly State Readings: While the homily clearly references the readings, it would be beneficial to explicitly state the book, chapter, and verse for each reading at the beginning or as they are introduced. For example, "Our first reading from the Book of Exodus (Exodus 3:1-15)..." This helps the congregation follow along and connect the homily directly to the liturgy.
12. Brief Introduction/Greeting: While the opening sentence is strong, a more traditional greeting to the "brothers and sisters in Christ" or "dear friends" could set a slightly more communal tone at the very outset, though this is a minor stylistic preference.

13. Flow of Transition: Ensure a smooth flow of transition between readings and the South African context and, where applicable, the Saint of the Day, etc.

Be sure to observe the 13 points above while keeping to the rhetorical style of Josiah Bartlett, etc.

Conclude with Reflective Questions:

End the homily with three introspective and practical questions grounded in Ignatian Spirituality, focusing on personal application and how to live out the Gospel for the day.

Frame these questions in a way that encourages deep reflection and personal transformation.

Begin the homily with a summary sentence for the whole homily.

Throughout the homily, use plain language and avoid all forms of trite phrasing.

Initial draft:

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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.