Fr Matthew Charlesworth, SJ
https://sj.mcharlesworth.fr/

Tuesday of the 1st week in Ordinary Time

Date: Tuesday, January 13, 2026 | **Season:** Ordinary Time before Easter | **Year:** A
First Reading: 1 Samuel 1:9–20
Responsorial Psalm: 1 Samuel 2:1, 4–8d | **Response:** 1 Samuel 2:1
Gospel Acclamation: 1 Thessalonians 2:13
Gospel Reading: Mark 1:21–28
Preached at: the Chapel of Emerald Hill Children's Home **in the** Archdiocese of Harare, Zimbabwe**.**

God works quietly, but when he acts, lives are changed.

Dear sisters in Christ, good morning. Today's readings remind us of something very simple. God listens when people pray from the heart. God lifts those who feel low. And God speaks a word that sets people free.

Our first reading from the First Book of Samuel brings us to a doorway, the entrance to the sanctuary at Shiloh. Hannah is standing there with a heavy heart. She has been sad for a long time. She is not shouting. She is not drawing attention to herself. Her lips move, but no sound comes out. She is praying quietly.

In her time, prayer was usually spoken aloud. Silent prayer looked strange. Because of this, the priest Eli gets it wrong. He thinks she is drunk. He sees her lips moving but does not see her pain. Without meaning to, he adds more hurt to someone who is already hurting.

Hannah stays calm. She tells the truth. "I am pouring out my heart before the Lord." Her prayer may come from pain, or from closeness to God, or from shame she cannot speak aloud. But God hears it. Hannah prays to the Lord of Hosts, the great God of heaven and earth. And yet this mighty God bends down to listen to one woman praying under her breath.

She asks God to remember her. In the Bible, when God remembers, God acts. Hannah promises that if she is given a son, she will give him back to God. She will not cling to him. She will trust God with his life. The sign of this trust will be his uncut hair, a sign that his life belongs to God, not to human plans.

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Before anything else changes, Hannah changes. She eats. Her face is no longer sad. Peace comes first. Only later does the reading say, “The Lord remembered her.” A child is born. She names him Samuel. “I asked him of the Lord.” From a quiet prayer, a servant of God is born.

Many people today know what it feels like to stand where Hannah stood. In Zimbabwe, there are families who work hard and still struggle. Young people wait for work after finishing school. Many feel tired, unseen, or misunderstood. Silence is often taken for weakness. Waiting is taken for failure. But God is close to those who keep praying, even when they have no words left.

The psalm we pray today is Hannah’s own song. It is strong and clear. The strong are brought low. The hungry are filled. The poor are lifted from the dust. This is how God works. When we pray this psalm, we are saying, “Lord, this is your way, and we want to walk with you.”

The Gospel from Mark takes us into a synagogue on the Sabbath. Jesus is teaching, and the people are astonished. They are struck by his words. He does not repeat what others have said. He does not hide behind opinions. He says, “I say to you.” He speaks with God’s authority.

We need to hear Jesus like that again, with fresh ears. It is easy to become used to his words. But each time we hear the Gospel, we are meant to be amazed again. Through Scripture, through the teaching of the Church, through prayer, Jesus still speaks to us today.

In the synagogue, there is a man with an unclean spirit. He is in the right place, but something inside him is not free. In this man, we can see ourselves. We come to Mass. We pray. And yet we struggle. We fall into the same sins. The same habits return again and again.

Jesus does not come to destroy this man. He comes to heal him. He speaks clearly. “Be silent. Come out of him.” The spirit leaves, but not without a struggle. This reminds us that change is not easy. Breaking bad habits takes time. Our own effort is not enough. We need Jesus to give us his grace. Only with his help can we truly become free.

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The people ask, “What is this?” It is a good question. What is this man who speaks with such authority? What is this power that heals and frees? This question invites us to stop and wonder. Who is Jesus really? What is God doing among us?

Today the Church remembers Saint Hilary, who spent his life helping people answer that question. He spoke clearly about who Jesus is, even when it cost him dearly. He reminds us that truth matters, because confusion always harms real people.

These readings belong together. Hannah teaches us how to pray when life hurts. Her song teaches us what kind of world God is shaping. Jesus teaches us how God acts to bring freedom. Ordinary Time is when these lessons are meant to shape our daily lives.

As we go into this day, hold on to this simple truth. God listens. God lifts. God speaks to set free.

As you pray this morning, ponder these questions in your heart.

- Where am I waiting quietly before God, and what do I need to say honestly?
- What habit or fear keeps returning in my life, and where do I need Jesus’ grace?
- Who near me is tired or overlooked, and what small, real thing can I do today to lift them?

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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.

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