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Thursday of the 2nd week in Ordinary Time

Date: Thursday, January 22, 2026 | **Season:** Ordinary Time before Easter | **Year:** A
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 56:2–3, 9–13 | **Response:** Psalm 56:5b
Gospel Reading: Mark 3:7–12
Preached at: the Chapel of Emmaus House **in the** Archdiocese of Harare, Zimbabwe**.**

They came out singing and dancing, filling the streets with colour and relief. It was the sound a people make when fear has loosened its grip. Saul returned with David, and the women sang what poetry always sings. Saul has killed his thousands, David his ten thousands. Praise, not arithmetic. Joy, not rivalry. Yet something in Saul tightened. A song meant to unite became a threat. A celebration became a comparison. And from that moment, the heart of a king began to shrink.

Jealousy rarely storms in. It arrives quietly, dressed as wounded pride, as being overlooked, as fairness denied. Saul had been chosen, anointed, crowned. He had led and fought and carried the weight of his people. But when the light touched another, he felt himself fading. Instead of resting in who he was before God, he measured himself against who he was not. That measuring hollowed him out. It always does.

Alongside him stands Jonathan, and the Scriptures slow down when they speak of him. They tell us that his soul was bound to the soul of David, and that he loved him as his own life. The Bible does not apologise for this language. It does not explain it away. It simply places before us a bond marked by loyalty, tenderness, and courage. Jonathan sees what Saul cannot bear to see, that God's favour on David is not a threat but a gift. Though he knows that David's rise may cost him the throne, he loosens his grip on the future he expected. He places his robe on David's shoulders, his sword in David's hand. Love makes him free. Integrity makes him brave. He dares to ask his father a question that still exposes our excuses. Why sin against innocent blood?

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In a world where affection between men is often reduced to rivalry or suspicion, this friendship stands as a quiet challenge. It shows a strength that does not dominate, a love that does not possess, a closeness that does not need to harden itself to survive. Where Saul measures, Jonathan delights. Where Saul fears losing himself, Jonathan gives himself away.

The psalm today sounds like it is prayed in a low voice, perhaps at night, perhaps on the run. My enemies trample on me all day long. When I am afraid, I put my trust in you. It is the prayer of David, but also of anyone bruised by another person's fear or ambition. Jealousy in those with power always spills outward. We know this in our own land, when leadership becomes about guarding position rather than serving people, when suspicion replaces trust, and the weakest pay the price. Yet the psalm refuses despair. This I know, that God is for me. Trust widens what jealousy shrinks.

Then the Gospel opens outwards. Crowds come from everywhere, from the centre and the margins, from holy places and from regions long dismissed. They press in on Jesus, desperate enough to believe that even a touch might be enough. He steps into a boat so they are not crushed, but he does not step away. Compassion steadies him. The unclean spirits fall down and shout the truth about who he is, yet he silences them. Not because the truth is false, but because it is premature. They want power over him, not communion with him. They name him without following him.

Jesus refuses control and refuses rejection. He heals without first sorting motives. He knows that many come to God to get before they learn how to stay. Saul grasps and grows smaller. Jesus pours himself out and draws the world to himself.

Today the Church remembers St Vincent of Saragossa, a deacon who served quietly and suffered fiercely. When ordered to hand over the Scriptures and betray the poor, he refused. His body was broken, but his freedom could not be taken. Vincent did not cling to status or protect himself through fear. His life was not measured against others, but offered wholly to God. Even his persecutors were unsettled by the peace that suffering could not steal.

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For those of us shaped by Ignatian prayer, this is an invitation to notice what moves within us. Where do we feel diminished by another's gifts? Whose song unsettles us? Where has comparison begun to erode gratitude in our community, in our ministries, in our nation? And like Jonathan, can we name what is good in another and even protect it, even when it costs us?

Jesus still draws crowds, not with noise but with mercy. Not by pushing others down, but by lifting the wounded up. He still teaches us that God's work does not depend on us being the centre, only on us being faithful.

As we pray this morning, allow me to leave three questions with you to pray over.

- Where has jealousy quietly taken root in me, and what fear is feeding it?
- Whose gifts or closeness do I struggle to rejoice in, and why?
- When I come to Jesus, am I only seeking relief, or am I ready to follow him into a freer and more generous way of loving?

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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.