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Saturday of the 5th week of Lent

Date: Saturday, March 28, 2026 | **Season:** Lent | **Year:** A
First Reading: Ezekiel 37:21–28
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 31:10–13 | **Response:** Psalm 31:10d
Gospel Acclamation: Ezekiel 18:31
Gospel Reading: John 11:45–56
Preached at: the Chapel of Prestage House **in the** Archdiocese of Harare, Zimbabwe**.**

We are coming near the end of Lent. Palm Sunday is very close. Holy Week is almost here. Easter is coming, and we look forward to it with hope. But first, we must walk with Jesus through his suffering and his Passion. The Church does not let us jump too quickly to Easter joy. First, we stay with Jesus on the road of the cross.

The first reading gives us a beautiful promise. God speaks to a people who are divided and scattered. They are far from home. They are broken as a nation. And God says, I will gather them. I will bring them back. I will make them one. God promises to be close to them again. He says, “They shall be my people, and I will be their God.” He promises peace. He promises to stay among them.

This is not only about the people of Israel long ago. It is also about us. Sometimes our lives are scattered. Our minds are busy. Our hearts are tired. We carry worries, hurts, and fears. Sometimes even in our work together, we can feel divided or distant from one another. Today God says to us also: I want to gather you. I want to make you one. I want to bring you back to me.

The reading also speaks about one shepherd, one king, like David. For us, this points to Jesus. Jesus is the Good Shepherd. He does not run away from his people. He looks for the lost. He protects his flock. He brings people together.

In the Gospel, we see something sad and serious. Jesus has just raised Lazarus from the dead. This should have led everyone to believe in him. Some did believe. But others became afraid. The leaders began to worry. They said, if Jesus continues like this, things will become dangerous. Then Caiaphas, the high priest, says it is better for one man to die than for the whole nation to suffer.

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He says this because he is afraid. He wants to protect the nation. But Saint John tells us that Caiaphas is speaking more truth than he understands. Jesus really will die for the people, and not only for one nation, but to gather all the scattered children of God. Jesus will die to bring people together. He will die to make a new covenant between God and his people.

This is very important for us as we come near Holy Week. Jesus gathers us, but he does it through the cross. Easter is coming, yes, but first comes Good Friday. First comes the suffering of Christ. First comes his love shown in sacrifice.

This is also a message for us in our work and in our community. When people are tired or afraid, it is easy to become hard. It is easy to think only about problems, only about protecting ourselves, only about what is practical. But Jesus shows another way. He does not save by pushing people away. He saves by giving himself. He does not divide. He gathers. He does not protect himself. He loves to the end.

So today, on this day of recollection, we can ask for a simple grace: Lord, gather me. Gather my busy mind. Gather my tired heart. Gather our community. Gather us as we prepare for Palm Sunday, Holy Week, and Easter. Help us stay close to you, not only in the joy of Easter, but also on the road of the cross.

And perhaps we can keep three simple questions in our hearts:

- Where in my life do I feel scattered or tired?
- What fear in me makes it hard to trust Jesus?
- How can I stay close to Christ as we enter Holy Week?

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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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