

Commentary on the Gospel for Sun, Aug 28th 2016

In the Shona culture, and maybe in others around Zimbabwe and the whole globe, if you receive a gift, you should never open it in the presence of the people who gave it to you.

For us, who would be expecting a response about the present, these manners can seem odd, but the deep meaning is that receiving a present is a chance to have the experience that you are loved by another. The object is nothing. The main gift is love, and love belongs to the giver and to the receiver.

From this image it can be easier to understand the readings of today, where God shows us how necessary it is to cut off our natural tendency to seek what is too sublime for us, to search into things beyond our strength, to recline ourselves at living rooms tables always in the best places.

Do not be ashamed about occupying the lower place, because it is the place from which we will support others. Don't be ashamed to receive the gift we didn't win. Let Jesus pick you up, freely, as he did once, for ever, because his deliverance is a model for us all, realised by the sprinkling of his blood.

What will happen when we became experts, as Jesus is, in the universal art of giving gifts? For sure, we will not be expecting anything, but we will welcome the gifts of others, and the others themselves, as a God's gift. That will be our place of honour, for ever.

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