

Archbishop Thabo Makgoba
Swaziland – Eucharist with Diocesan Clergy
Notes for Homily
30 October June 2009

Rom 11:1-6 (7-10) 11-12
Ps 94:14-19
Lk 14:1,7-11

May I speak in the name of God, who exalts the humble and humbles the exalted.

Dear brothers and sisters of the Diocese of Swaziland, it is a great joy to be with you this morning ...

The gospel reading we have just heard has some very alarming words for an Archbishop, who so often is directed to a seat of honour ...

Yet coming here for an audience with His Majesty, I am also aware that in some quarters, even being an Archbishop is not that elevated!

What then shall we learn from this passage?

A reminder, should we need it, that the hierarchies of the world and the priorities of God do not always go hand in hand.

And that it is not for us to play the world at its own game – with our own playing at ranks and positions, whether among clergy or laity.

What matters is our own individual calling, and whether we are prepared to respond to God's hand upon our lives.

Our ambition should not be to this or that position, but, in whatever role we believe God has set before us, to fulfil it as best we can.

Nor should we try to take on the world on its own terms – playing the same games of status.

That said, neither can we ignore the world, or refuse to engage with it.

Rather, we take what opportunities we can, to come alongside and preach the gospel.

Earlier this year we read through the Acts of the Apostles in Morning Prayer, and, for example, we found everything from St Peter's words to the beggar at the Beautiful Gate through to St Peter's debates with King Herod Agrippa.

As St Paul himself said, we must be 'all things to all people', as the need arises, so that the gospel may be furthered.

And we should not be afraid to see the gospel in wider than purely spiritual terms.

Remember that Jesus said he came, with the Spirit of God upon him, to bring 'good news to the poor and liberty to the oppressed'.

The well-being of those who suffer poverty, oppression, and alleviating their plight, is one of our highest concerns - we are their servants.

Sometimes our calling as instruments of good news to the poor, liberty to the oppressed, may require us to be involved in ways we might rather not.

Our reading from St Paul's letter to the Romans reminds us that when Elijah thought he alone remained true to the Lord, God told him that he had kept for himself seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal.

Among those with whom we have to deal, who is to say that there may not be some who 'have not bowed the knee' to the gods of this world – of power, status and material gain – who may be secretly crying out for substantive encounter with God's people.

And Jesus himself 'ate with sinners'. He was not afraid to 'get his hands dirty'.

It was not that their dirt rubbed off on him – rather his holiness rubbed off on them.

Surely it can be the same for us.

The reassurance of the words from the Psalm:

- the Lord will not cast off his people;
- justice shall return to the righteous, and to all the true of heart.
- The Lord is my stronghold, my rock, my refuge

(And we can leave all retribution to God!)

We can stand firm, in confidence, within the righteousness of God. Let us not be afraid to be humble, so God may exalt us.

