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Saturday of the 30th Week in Ordinary Time

Date: Saturday, November 1, 2025 | **Season:** Ordinary Time after Easter | **Year:** C
First Reading: Romans 11:1–2a, 11–12, 25–29
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 94:12–13a, 14–15, 17–18 | **Response:** Psalm 94:14a
Gospel Acclamation: Matthew 11:29ab
Gospel Reading: Luke 14:1, 7–11
Preached at: the Chapel of Emmaus House **in the** Archdiocese of Harare, Zimbabwe**.**

The readings today are about humility that heals, mercy that never lets go, and the divine patience that holds the world together. They remind us that God's story is not one of competition but of communion — that in the Kingdom of Heaven, greatness is not seized but received, and mercy is not measured but multiplied.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, our first reading from the Letter to the Romans draws us into Paul's restless heart. He stands at the crossroads of two worlds — Israel, the chosen people, and the Gentiles, the unexpected heirs of grace. Paul speaks almost in anguish: has God rejected His people? Never. For, he says, the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable. The word he uses — ametamelēta, "never regretted" — carries a deep tenderness. God does not take back what He has once given; He does not un-choose what He has once chosen.

Paul's image of Israel and the Gentiles is like an olive tree — a living symbol that runs through the Scriptures. The wild shoots of the Gentiles have been grafted into the cultivated tree of Israel, and together they draw from the same root: the steadfast mercy of God. Paul's warning is simple and searching — do not boast, do not presume. If you stand, stand by faith. And if you fall, fall into mercy. Here, humility is not humiliation but truth: the truth of who we are before God.

That same truth echoes through the Psalm. "The Lord will not abandon His people." The psalmist's trust is not naïve optimism but the hard-won faith of those who have suffered. "When I thought, 'My foot is slipping,' your mercy, O Lord, held me up." The Hebrew word for mercy, *chesed*, suggests not sentiment but steadfast love — a love that clings even when all else collapses. In Zimbabwe

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today, where so many wrestle with the weariness of economic uncertainty, where young people dream but jobs disappear, and where the poor are too often left unheard, this Psalm must be prayed as promise: the Lord will not abandon His people.

And then we come to the Gospel. Jesus, observing how guests choose the best seats, tells a parable that seems like social advice but is in truth spiritual revolution. “When you are invited, take the lowest place.” In that culture, where one’s position at table mirrored one’s status in life, Jesus turns the whole system upside down. He is not teaching manners but revealing the manners of Heaven. The banquet table becomes an image of the Kingdom where honour is not claimed but conferred, and where true greatness comes not from rising above others but from kneeling beside them.

Imagine the scene in your prayer, as St Ignatius invites us to do. The long table, the flicker of lamps, the quiet clink of cups. Watch how Jesus moves among them — not towards the head, but to the margins. Feel the surprise when the host says, “Friend, move up higher.” Humility opens space for grace. Pride closes the door.

There is a word in Shona, unyoro, meaning both gentleness and the moisture that softens hard ground. True humility is like that — a gentleness that softens the soil of the heart so that mercy may take root. It allows us to see others not as rivals but as gifts, not as obstacles but as icons of the divine.

Here the teachings of Catholic Social Thought find their home. Humility leads to justice, for it reminds us that we belong to one another. It moves us to stand with the poor not as benefactors but as brothers. It teaches those in power that leadership is service. In the field, the clinic, the university, the parish — humility heals. When we stop clamouring for the highest seat, we begin to see the one who has no seat at all.

And so, brothers and sisters, perhaps the unifying image of today is that of the table — the place where humility and mercy meet. Each Mass is a rehearsal for that heavenly banquet where there are no seats of honour, only places of grace. Here, at the Eucharist, God invites us not to climb higher but to kneel lower, to receive what cannot be earned — the gift of Himself.

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As you leave this table today, carry this image in your heart. In a world of scrambling and striving, be content to take the lowest place, for there you will find Christ waiting. Let His mercy be your seat of honour.

And so we pray and reflect:

- Where in my life am I still choosing the highest seat — seeking recognition, control, or comfort — rather than the place where Christ sits in humility?
- When I feel forgotten or overlooked, can I trust, like Paul and the psalmist, that God's call and His care for me are never revoked?
- How might I, in my community or workplace, make space at the table for those who have been left standing outside — the poor, the excluded, the voiceless?

For whoever humbles himself will be exalted, and whoever lets mercy lead will never be left behind.

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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.