

A place at the table



Heavenly Father, you gift us with your Spirit and make us your children. May we live each day in the freedom of your kingdom, reaching out with your love to all whom you bring to us. In Jesus' name. Amen.

International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances

by Caroline Hodgson

Tuesday is designated International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances by the United Nations. The abhorrent practice of 'disappearing' people is often used as a strategy to spread terror and create insecurity which affects whole communities and the wider society.

The UN points out that enforced disappearance, once largely used by military dictatorships, is not these days restricted to a specific region of the world, but is a global problem. It can take place

in complex situations of internal conflict, especially as a means of political repression. Hundreds of thousands of people have vanished during conflicts or under repressive regimes in at least eighty-five countries around the world.

It's horrific to think of someone we love disappearing, and hopefully you have not been personally affected by this cruel practice. But it is a reality in the world we live in. So today, let's take some time to hold in our prayers those who have been affected.

www.un.org/en/observances/victims-enforced-disappearance



“It's an incredible mystery of God's love that the more you know how deeply you are loved, the more you will see how deeply your sisters and your brothers in the human family are loved.”


Henri Nouwen (1932-1996), Dutch Roman Catholic priest, writer and theologian

Barbara Mosse *reflects on* Luke 14:1. 7-14

“Invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind.” (Luke 14:13)

Jesus is visiting the house of a leader of the Pharisees – he can't have been the most comfortable house guest! Another controversial sabbath healing takes place, and then today's reading focuses on the behaviour and attitude of Jesus' fellow guests.

The passage suggests two clear levels of interpretation of this event. Superficially, Jesus' advice to his fellow guests about taking the lowest seat at the table has practical social implications. If guests are able to cultivate an attitude of humility, they will avoid the possible social embarrassment of being displaced by somebody their host deems to be more important.

But it is the deeper level of interpretation that is of more lasting significance, because Jesus is highlighting one of the critical signs of the kingdom. Humility may well be a proper attitude for disciples, but it also points towards a more widespread upending of the accepted social order. In the words of his mother Mary in the Magnificat: “He has brought down the powerful... and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty” (Luke 1:52-53). God is unconcerned with the wealth and social standing of our connections – far more important is the degree to which we have been able, in our relationships, to embrace the inclusiveness of God's kingdom. 

The parts of a church
Part IV – crossing the floor

by Heather Cooke

Naturally there were crosses already in churches, but a church shaped like a cross? – now there's an idea. As its name suggests, the transept cuts across the rectangle, between chancel and nave, giving a floor plan in the shape of a cross.

Derived from both Latin and Greek, the word *ambo* originally referred to a hilltop. How appropriate when Jesus preached his sermon on the mount. Much else happened on

mountaintops throughout the Bible, from Moses receiving the commandments, to Jesus being transfigured and eventually ascending into heaven. A forerunner of both lectern and pulpit, the ambo was originally portable. Placed closer to the congregation in the nave, after a spell in the chancel or sanctuary, it again made the ministry of the word central to worship.

Often, nowadays, sermons are preached from lecterns on the same level as the congregation, a fitting reminder that we're all equal in the sight of God. 