

Hospitality. . . *the essence of the kingdom*

Our most holy Mother Mary is our model for hospitality. She opened her heart and entire being to our Lord.

And Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her. Luke 1:38



“Open Wide the Doors to Christ”

We are called to live as John Paul II challenged us to do in the Jubilee year . . . to “Open Wide the Doors to Christ”. We are each called first to open wide the doors of our hearts to Christ and then to all our fellow travelers-welcoming those who know Jesus and most especially those who do not know Jesus. This is hospitality - this is spreading the Good News!! As Scott Hahn says: Hospitality is the essence of the Kingdom”

The definition of hospitality in the American Heritage Dictionary is:

“Cordial or generous reception of or disposition toward guests.”

So if we think about this- hospitality entails giving and self-sacrifice, it also requires kindness and humility yet we know that through giving of ourselves we also receive. We too are nourished and grow closer to Christ.

Why is hospitality so important? Because some may never come to know Christ or His Kingdom unless **we invite** them in !!! Hospitality is the way we advance the Kingdom. Hospitality is often the way we entertain God Himself. The scriptures remind us of this:

“Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.” Hebrews 13:2

This scripture challenges us - it reminds us that the way we treat each person we come in contact with each day IS the way we are treating Christ! That can also be sobering thought - even within the walls of our own homes. **Hospitality is an attitude of the heart!** The more we have welcomed Christ into our hearts the more we are able to invite guests in as well. Hospitality is more than opening the door and being polite - *much more*. We actually carry our hospitality in our hearts - it's the doors of our heart that must open with love and graciousness and that can be done anywhere!

“And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they partook of food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.” Acts 2:46-47

The Practice of Hospitality

Hospitality is not an option whether we like the person or not! This virtue has really fallen by the wayside in our self-centered, independent, technological society.

Hospitality was of great importance as is evident in both the Old and New Testaments. Before chain hotels and restaurants, before telephones and fast transportation people had no choice but to rely on the providence of strangers. Hosts had a sacred obligation to provide food and drink, water to wash their feet, and a place to rest. The guest had an obligation to accept what was offered. The refusal on either part was a serious breach of honor. Guests were to be treated with great respect - guests were in turn expected to be gracious and accepting of a host's offerings. This is a difficult thing to fathom in our day and age isn't it? Hospitality reminds us of our dependence on God and one another. We need each other on this journey for at times like the Israelites we are strangers in a foreign land . . . We don't like to be reminded that we cannot do it on our own.

Hospitality not only reminds us of our dependence on God and one another- Hospitality requires humility and self-sacrifice. Hospitality is not always easy and it is often tiring- this is precisely why sometimes we are called to be the "guests" and to welcome and appreciate that. Just as it sometimes is a service to allow someone to serve us, it is a gift to allow someone else to extend to us their hospitality and to receive it lovingly and graciously. We all need to take turns being host and being guest!

Some hospitality questions & suggestions:

How is my "heart attitude"? Do I welcome others graciously recognizing their dignity in Christ – especially within my own home?

Do I listen attentively to others? Do I show interest in others lives?

Do I sacrifice my time to do something for or with someone?

Do I graciously receive hospitality?

How often did Jesus eat with people? Do I make an effort to share meals frequently with others ? Who can I invite to enjoy a meal or recreation time?

Do we above all invite people to come to know Jesus? Is there someone you can invite to our greatest meal – The Eucharistic Banquet – our Mass?

"Anyone who meets us should be meeting Christ"
Mother Teresa to her sisters