


The Ministry of Hospitality: Who is my Neighbor



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Opening Prayer

Faithful God, we give thanks for your steadfast love and your devotedness that extends to the clouds. As we wait in joyful hope, working and praying together for the full visible unity of your church, fill us with confidence in your promises .

We make this prayer through Jesus Christ, our Lord, in the power of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

USCCB Prayer for Christian Unity Day 4 bible study packet.

Hospitality is more than a greeting

“He has chosen you for himself, to be his love and his light in the world. The simplest way of becoming his light is by being kind and loving, thoughtful, and sincere with others: ‘By this they will know you are his disciples.’”

Blessed Teresa of Calcutta

Hospitality in Biblical Times

The Lord appeared to Abraham by the terebinth of Mamre, as he sat in the entrance of his tent, while the day was growing hot. Looking up, he saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he ran from the entrance of the tent to greet them; and bowing to the ground, he said, “Sir, if I may ask you this favor, please do not go on past your servant. Let some water be brought, that you may bathe your feet, and then rest yourselves under the tree...

Hospitality in Biblical Times

... Now that you have come this close to your servant, let me bring you a little food, that you may refresh yourselves; and afterward you may go on your way." "Very well," they replied, "do as you have said." Abraham hastened into the tent and told Sarah, "Quick, three seahs of fine flour! Knead it and make rolls." He ran to the herd, picked out a tender, choice steer and gave it to a servant, who quickly prepared it. Then he got some curds and milk, as well as the steer that had been prepared and set these before them; and he waited on them under the tree while they ate.

Genesis 18:1-8

Abraham's Example

He did not ignore them.
He made haste to greet them.
He bowed down to them, treating them like royalty – as honored guests.
He invited them to stay and rest.
He offered them water to wash their feet.
He offered them something to eat.
He prepared the best he had for his guests.

Evangelium Gaudium

Pope Francis

47. The Church is called to be the house of the Father, with doors always wide open. One concrete sign of such openness is that our church doors should always be open, so that if someone, moved by the Spirit, comes there looking for God, he or she will not find a closed door.

Our Hospitality

What would our churches look like if our hospitality was like that of Abrahams?
– This sort of hospitality may have surprises for us also, as it did for Abraham. For him, the strangers prophesied that within a year Sarah would conceive and have a son.
– Are we ready for the surprises that God may have in store for us because of our inviting hospitality?

Our Hospitality

God is seen in the most unlikely of people, we may be the ones that become guests of the most gracious Host of all!

Second Vatican Council

The reason behind hospitality is not simply a desire to be sociable or friendly, rather, as Christians we believe that Christ reveals His presence to us in various ways. The Second Vatican Council speaks of four different ways that Christ is present in the celebration of the Eucharist in *Sacrosanctum Concilium*; the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy.

Second Vatican Council

1. He is present in the Eucharistic meal, where He gives us His body and blood as food and drink.
2. He is present and speaks to us when the word of God is proclaimed in our midst.
3. He is present in the person of the priest who presides over the Eucharistic celebration for it is Christ himself how is the true leader of our worship.
4. He is present in the worshipping community.

Romans 12:10-13
Love one another with mutual affection; anticipate one another in showing honor. Do not grow slack in zeal, be fervent in spirit, and serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, endure in affliction, and persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the holy ones, exercise hospitality.

Hebrews 12:1-2
Let mutual love continue. Do not neglect hospitality, for through it some have unknowingly entertained angels.

I Peter 4:8-9
Above all, let your love for one another be intense, because love covers a multitude of sins. Be hospitable to one another without complaining.

MATTHEW 25:35-40

FOR I WAS HUNGRY AND YOU GAVE ME FOOD, I WAS THIRSTY AND YOU GAVE ME DRINK, A STRANGER AND YOU WELCOMED ME, NAKED AND YOU CLOTHED ME. THEN THE RIGHTEOUS WILL ANSWER AND SAY, "LORD WHEN DID WE SEE YOU HUNGRY..." AND THE KING WILL SAY TO THEM IN REPLY, "AMEN, I SAY TO YOU, WHATEVER YOU DID FOR ONE OF THESE LEAST BROTHERS OF MINE, YOU DID FOR ME."

What is hospitality?

Church hospitality is an expression of reverence for the presence of Christ in each member of the assembly. A willingness to be a hospitable community for the sake of Christ is simply following the commandment that Jesus left with us.

"I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another. . This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

What is hospitality?

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary says:

Given to generous and cordial reception of guests: readily receptive

Before we can practice hospitality, we must have:

- ▶ A love of God and then a love of people, just like the commandment that Jesus gave us. When Jesus was doing His ministry, here on earth, He did not bother with trivial pursuits, minor issues or stuff, He focused on the two things that really matter and last forever: God's Word and people.

Evangelium Gaudium

1. The joy of the gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. Those who accept his offer of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness and loneliness. With Christ joy is constantly born anew.

What is hospitality?

Hospitality is a form of **communication** and one of its characteristics is, it establishes a relationship between a visitor and a host. The hospitality gestures and behavior of the host establishes the overall perception and experience of the visitor. An open and receptive host can create a joyful and caring atmosphere that reflects the love of Christ for one another.

What is hospitality?

Hospitality is a vital element in creating a **sense of community** for worship. Welcoming people and making them feel at home is one way we help to build up the church. A person who feels welcomed and valued is much more likely to enter wholeheartedly into the celebration of the liturgy. A friendly and welcoming greeter can make that love of God apparent to people as they arrive.

Follow-Up

Continued efforts to follow-up with a visitor or newcomer whenever possible shows that person that you want them to be a part of your parish church.

- visitor registration
- visitor question card
- visitor comment card

Who are our visitors/newcomers?

They may be someone who:

- comes to Mass with a friend;
- is visiting different churches;
- someone who is shopping for a parish home.

It can also be:

- a mail carrier; a delivery or repair person; a neighbor across the street, etc.

Who are our visitors/newcomers?

May be a newcomer who is ready to register in your church community and become an involved parishioner. Or already registered and seeking ways to get to know the community and form relationships within the parish.

Who are our visitors/newcomers?

Maybe not visitors or newcomers at all, but our regular parishioners. People who have been attending Mass at your church for decades, maybe whose family has been in your parish for generations. Are we treating each other with the same hospitality that we are saying we want to treat new people?

Who are our Ministers of Hospitality?

Greeters and Ushers are definitely the first contact with others as we come to worship. They make the first impression to churchgoers so they should be early, knowledgeable about their roles and include mixed representation from all groups including ages and family units.

Who are our Ministers of Hospitality?

The ENTIRE ASSEMBLY are also Ministers of Hospitality. Though greeter and/or usher may make the first impression, we all have the responsibility of offering hospitality.

- be aware and attentive to people around you(hello; smile)
- if you notice someone new, greet them
- move over in the pew, help them with the hymnals, etc.

Who are our Ministers of Hospitality?

We all meet people in the parish community, we know that Christ dwells in each of us and if we fail to greet others in our liturgies, on our church campuses, with and in our church environments and the daily life of the parish, then we are ignoring Christ Himself.

How do we offer hospitality?

At weekend liturgies:

- Do we have ministers at weddings, baptisms, funerals?
- Are our ushers and greeters friendly and knowledgeable? (directions, listening devices, where to sit, quiet rooms for children, etc.).
- Worship aides if available.
- Inviting the assembly to greet each other at the beginning of the liturgy.
- Remind everyone silence their electronics
- Be considerate to latecomers

How do we offer hospitality?

- Collection - should be prayerful, dignified and requires care and respect by both collectors and assembly.
- Procession of Gifts should be a representation of the whole assembly, everyone should be encouraged to participate - seek out new people.
- Communion Procession should be unhurried and reverent as each one shares in the Eucharistic banquet.

How do we offer hospitality?

- Offer a friendly greeting to people you do not know at the coffee and donut social after Mass, during choir practice, in the hallway, at children's activities, etc.
- Help with directions, look up room locations, telephone numbers, go the extra mile.
- Offer to get information they need or give them the name and number of the person who can assist them.

How do we offer hospitality?

Call or mail a note to someone you have not seen at church recently...
 "Just thinking of you..."
 Speak to people that you do not know at events, meetings, classes, etc.
 Send a greeting to someone you may know whose name is on a prayer list, etc.

Other Thoughts

Newcomers

- Send a welcome packet out to them promptly, including... a letter from the pastor, parish information (list of staff and phone numbers, faith formation information, a sample bulletin, calendar of adult formation sessions, mother's day out programs, helpful information about your community (Catholic dentists, doctors, hospital info, other community services, etc.).

How do we offer hospitality?

- Make a follow-up phone call within a reasonable amount of time.
- Invite them to a special newcomer function.
- Send out a "first impression" survey.
- Make a home visit, send a church video, invite them to a church tour...
- Other ideas

QUESTIONS and Answers

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