

LET THE SPIRIT BREATHE . . .



“ALL ARE TO BE WELCOMED AS CHRIST”
ST. BENEDICT

God of welcoming, make the door of my heart wide enough to receive all who need human love and fellowship; and narrow enough to shut out all envy, pride and strife. Amen.

Adapted from Inscription on St Stephen's Church, Walbrook, London

This month . . .

Reflections on . . . Hospitality

Hospitality, at its heart, is offering to all the ‘welcome’ of Christ. Christian welcome is all inclusive: neighbors, strangers, friends, and family. Hospitality is about creating a safe place where “friend or stranger can enter and experience the welcoming spirit of Christ in another”. (Adele Calhoun) We must remember that hospitality is not about duty or performance, a spotless home or food that is ‘gourmet’ in presentation and taste. It is about receiving one another as Christ receives us. It is about receiving another as Christ himself. “For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me . . . just as you have done it unto the least of these, you have done it unto me [Christ].” (Matthew 25: 35-40 NRSV)

Hospitality is about love. It is about being present to others, in every aspect of their lives, enveloping body, mind, and spirit, prompted by God’s love and desire for healing and transformation in the lives of his children.

“The essence of hospitality is a heart open to God, with room prepared for the Guestness of the Holy Spirit, that welcomes the presence of Christ. This is what we share with those to whom we open our doors. We give them him.”

Karen Burton Mains

The Stranger Within

Elizabeth Canham, in an article for *Weavings* (September 2003), intimates that each of us is a mystery, never reaching the depths of our own being where there is, below our surface, a richness and depth of the handiwork of God. Canham shares, “We are strangers to ourselves and the most appropriate posture we can adopt is awe and a willingness to allow the Spirit to reveal more of what is below the surface.” When our journey allows us to discover and welcome the stranger within us we are better prepared to recognize and honor the uniqueness and mystery of others, setting aside judgements, acknowledging individual giftedness and allowing us to welcome all to God’s table.

Exploring Hospitality

Explore ways where you can spend time with God, discovering the ‘stranger’ within yourself. What new awarenesses have come to light which help you understand yourself and others more fully?

What resources can you share so that another may experience the reality of the ‘welcoming’ heart of Christ?

How can you reach out beyond your current circle of family and friends to include others?

Spiritual Reflections
May 2010
Harriet White, Evangelist



IN THE GARDEN . . .

The flower symbolism associated with anthuriums is 'hospitality'. This flower also symbolizes happiness and abundance.

A Sign of Hospitality



My maternal grandmother lived in the farming belt of California. Trains would travel through her area picking up produce to be shipped to other parts of the country. With the trains came 'hobos' finding their way to her door in need of something to eat. My grandparents lived meagerly and with a large family had little to spare. Yet she never failed to give these men something to eat; most often a biscuit and a cup of buttermilk. It wasn't much, but it was something.

Hobos were usually people that during the Great Depression in the 1930s, left home so there would be one less mouth to feed. They hoped that down the road, the next town, another area of the country would provide a better chance of finding work. To cope with the difficulty of hobo life, hobos developed a system of symbols, a code of sorts to provide directions, information, and warnings to other hobos. They would scratch this code on fences or posts to direct and help their fellow travelers along in difficult times. On the fence by my grandmother's gate was one such symbol. It was a circle with an 'x' crossed through the center. To another hobo the meaning was clear: "Good place for a handout". There was also the symbol of a cat drawn on her fence. Its presence meant: "A good woman lives here".

At times I wonder about the effect my grandmother's kindness had on those who approached her door. More importantly, perhaps, I ponder the nature of my own kindness to others and the visible signs in my own life that would indicate that I, too, am a good woman, willing to extend hospitality, without judgement, to others in need.

Hospitality should have no other nature than love.

Henrietta Mears

Reflection question . . .

"Who, in my life, models hospitality for me?"



André Trocmé was a pastor and spiritual leader of a Protestant congregation in Le Chambon in Southeastern France. During World War II he urged his congregation and his village to give shelter to any Jew who asked for it. For three years the village sheltered Jews of Southern France. It is estimated that some 5,000 Jews passed through this village. Trocmé was asked by authorities to cease his activities. His response was straight forward: "These people came here for help and for shelter. I am their shepherd. A shepherd does not forsake his flock... I do not know what a Jew is. I know only human beings."

Trocmé and the village risked their lives to give shelter to the Jewish people. When later asked as to why he responded the way he had, Trocmé answered, "I could not bear to be separated from Jesus."

Scripture focus:

"Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God."

Romans 15:7 NRSV

" . . . just as you have done it unto the least of these . . . you have done it unto me."

Matthew 25:40

"Keep on loving each other as brothers and sisters. Don't forget to show hospitality to strangers, for some who have done this have entertained angels without realizing it."

Hebrews 13:1-2 NLT

"And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength. The second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself'."

Mark 12:30-31 NLT

In perspective . . .

Hospitality is the desire "to be a safe person who offers others the grace, shelter, and presence of Jesus". Adele Calhoun