

**The Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time A - Hospitality for Other Engenders New Life**  
June 28, 2020.

This Sunday's readings remind us that the new life we've received in Christ as Christians, is not only due to Our Lord's sacrifice on the cross, but is also a pattern of life that we should be following to engender the new life. Merriam Webster's Dictionary defines **Hospitality** as "**generous and friendly treatment of visitors and guests.**" Dictionary.com goes further to define it as "**the friendly and generous reception and entertainment of guests, visitors, or strangers.**"

In the First Reading (2 Kings 4:8-11,14-16a) an influential woman receives the promise of a son after showing hospitality to the prophet Elisha because he was a man of God. This woman saw something of God in Elisha which moved her to invite Elisha to dine. She extended her hospitality by serving a few meals and offering a place for Elisha to stay when he was in town, expecting nothing in return. Her hospitality and generosity were a sacrifice of her time and treasure for the sake of the Lord's mission, a sacred duty. Serving Elisha was serving the Lord. With no children on the horizon, she and her husband's line was destined to come to an end. Through her hospitality and selfless sacrifice, she and her family received new life with the promise of a son. "**When the woman had been called and stood at the door, Elisha promised, "This time next year you will be fondling a baby son."**

In the Second Reading (Romans 6:3-4, 8-11) St. Paul reminds us that "**we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death...so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life.**" It was sacrifice and death that brought us new life in Christ, and we must also sacrifice and die to ourselves so that Christ's life may take hold of us and engender a new life. This death and new life takes place spiritually and sacramentally through Baptism, but one day, just as it did for Christ, it will take place for real: death awaits us all someday. But if we believe in Christ, a new life awaits us too. Sin leads to death, so the more we deaden ourselves to sin and sacrifice ourselves for others as Christ did, the more the new life in Christ can take hold of us and make our new lives flourish.

In the Gospel (Matthew 10:37-41) we see that hospitality to others is hospitality to Our Lord who reminds us "**Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. Whoever welcomes a prophet in the name of the prophet will receive a prophet's reward; and whoever welcomes a righteous person in the name of the righteous person will receive the reward of the righteous;**" When we serve others, especially those who are serving the Lord, like the wealthy woman in the first reading, we are serving the Lord himself. He's also very good at hiding in the people you'd least expect. Our Lord invites the disciples to examine why they are serving others: are they serving themselves in some way, trying to gain something for their service, or are they truly serving them because they serve the Lord? Our Lord warns us that we must take up our cross and even lose our lives in serving others. But he also promises that in the end, he will take care of us too if we focus on caring for him through caring for others.

**Hospitality** is one of the cornerstones of **Benedictine spirituality**, and it is based on seeing Christ in the guest. In **the Rule of St. Benedict**, Chapter 53 Hospitality is dedicated to the reception of guests: "*Guests are to be met with due courtesy by the abbot or his deputy; during their stay they are to be under the special protection of an appointed monk; they are not*

*to associate with the rest of the community except by special permission.*” Christ told his disciples that their service and disservice to others would also be directed at him, and this teaching is the foundation for the Benedictine attitude on hospitality: **“Let all guests who arrive be received as Christ, because He will say: ‘I was a stranger and you took Me in’** (Matthew 25:35). When a guest arrives, the Rule of St. Benedict prescribes that he be greeted by the superior and the brothers, and they all pray together before anything else. The Abbot attends to the guest, eats with them and teaches the guest about “divine law.” **Hospitality also involves flexibility:** in the Rule, it prescribes a separate kitchen with monks on duty to attend to the guests’ needs outside of scheduled meal times.

Each of us is a “church,” a temple of the Holy Spirit. Despite our sins, we carry the essence of God, his love, and his divinity. And the Holy Spirit, the soul of the Church, arouses in us a desire for a change of life, for conversion and for unity! For this reason, we need to be more docile in our actions, welcoming people, being more fair to each other, judging others less and seeking to live unity in diversity. There are so many ways we Christians can practice **hospitality** which in a way is synonymous with **Charity**. It can be a very trivial act of kindness like a smile, a word of appreciation or a phone call. In extending a welcome to others we are following in the footsteps of the Lord who has room for everybody in his heart. It has absolutely nothing to do with entertainment which is mostly to impress people but keeping them at arm’s length. Hospitality is about opening up our heart and our home, just as we are, and being willing to invite Jesus into the conversation and deepen it. Hospitality is fundamentally an act of missional evangelism. It’s not dinner parties. It can be as simple as making a sandwich or some cookies for homeless people. It can be helping at a soup kitchen, homeless shelter, clinic, or halfway house. It can be welcoming a frightened adolescent mother or foster child into our home who needs some stability and a safe place to stay. During the recent flooding in the community, I am sure many parishes, people or organizations have open their hearts to welcome flooding victims a place to stay, meals to have and hands to help clean-up. **Big or small, you are not just loving the persons involved; you are loving Christ.**