



Sacred Space: May-June, 2010

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What is hospitality?

Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God. (Romans 15:7)
We love because he first loved us. (1 John 4:19)

Imagine loving as Christ loved, welcoming others as Christ welcomed....Hospitality is the first spiritual practice, it is the posture of any follower of Christ. It is the recognition of Christ in the other, even my enemy, and acting accordingly. Hospitality is the response to the realization that I am loved, and so I give away everything because I already have everything I could possibly want -- and more. How far can I go in my welcoming? How much is too much? How much hospitality would I show to Jesus if he knocked on my door?

Hospitality is essential to spiritual practice. It reminds you that you are part of a

greater whole...Putting others first puts you in the midst of life without the illusion of being the centre of life.
Rabbi Rami M. Shapiro, Minyan: Ten Principles for Living a Life of Integrity

“Someone filled with ideas, concepts, opinions and convictions cannot be a good host, for there is no inner space to listen, no openness to discover the gift of the other. It is not difficult to see how those ‘who know it all’ can kill conversation and prevent an interchange of ideas!

To prepare ourselves for service, we have to prepare for, and articulate a “learned ignorance”. This is very difficult to accept for people whose whole attitude is toward mastering and controlling the world. We all want to be educated so that we can be in control of the situation and make things work according to our own need. But education to service is not to master God but to be mastered *by* God. Such people are those whose articulate not-knowing makes them free to listen to the voice of God in the words of the people, in the events of the day...Learned ignorance makes one able to receive the word from others and the Other with great attention.”

Henri Nouwen

In Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life, Henri Nouwen defines hospitality as “creation of free space where a stranger can enter and become a friend instead of an enemy. Hospitality is not to change people, but to offer space where change can take place... The paradox of hospitality is that it wants to create emptiness, not a fearful emptiness, but a friendly emptiness where strangers can enter and find themselves free; free to sing their own songs, speak their own languages, dance their own dances; free to leave and follow their own vocations.”



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wrote, "Hospitality begins with God. Because we have a supremely hospitable God, in whose image and likeness we are made, we are capable of reflecting hospitality back to God, to others, to the earth, and even to ourselves...God's first great act of hospitality to us is Creation itself...the second great act of divine hospitality is the Incarnation: 'The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.'"

Wishing you all a wonderful summer rich in love and laughter and hospitality.

Gregor+

Several members of St. Luke's spent a couple of peaceful days at Weston Priory in Weston, Vermont at the end of April. The priory and its guest houses are great examples of hospitality. Here, John Price and Sally Griffin share with us a few of their thoughts following the visit:

It might be assumed that a third visit to Weston Priory in less than two years constituted a severe case of "same old, same old"...Far from it! After spending a week relaxing in the areas of New York city and Princeton, we did not expect Weston to provide much more along the lines of "getting away from it all." Yet, because of the unbelievable peace that prevails there, Weston offered an opportunity to shift down one more gear and decompress even further.

However, the experience is not one of an ostrich hiding its head in the sand. Some of the readings and the reflections in lieu of a sermon given by the Brothers referred to issues of the day intelligently and with such passion for justice and were expressed in a way that did not suggest panic over the wicked ways of the world but a profound

desire to display compassion and love in coming to grips with that world.

John Price

John and I arrived around 1 p.m., earlier than usual, so we wandered over to the bookstore. This was our third visit to the Priory, and looking around the store, it felt a bit ho-hum. I could not help wondering: was Weston losing its magic?

After picking up the keys to Bethany House (where the eight of us would be staying), we tried to meet with the brother in charge of hospitality but he was not answering the phone. Well, we thought, we'll go the next service and look for him afterwards....

Once sitting down in the Chapel, I felt the tension lift. There was a feeling of calm and peace...I felt centred. Just beyond the Chapel there is a small visiting area, where we went following the service. There we were greeted by the guest brother, and then afterwards by all the brothers. It was special!

Overall, I was struck by the fact that these brothers "practice what they preach". We so often fall short, but here is a small community that lives out what they believe...that is a true symbol of what it means to live the Christian life.

Sally Griffin

*So much wisdom and such inspiring reflections on hospitality! Thank you Gregor, Sally and John. May we **all** learn what it means to "see Christ in every face we meet."*
Wishing you a wonderful summer!

Jennifer Camfield ed.