

Wellspring Fransalian Center for Spirituality

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Brothers and Sisters,

The theme of hospitality runs through the Scripture readings of this Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time of the Year. The first reading tells us of the woman of Shunem treating Elisha as a "Holy man of God" and offering him hospitality. Hospitality was not only a virtue but also a sacred duty for this woman and her people. The woman was blessed with the gift of a child as a reward for her hospitality. In the second reading, Paul tells us that hospitality offered to followers of Christ is hospitality offered to Christ himself because we are baptized into his life and into his death. Today's Gospel speaks of Jesus assuring his disciples that whoever shows them hospitality will be blessed in abundance.

Hospitality was one of the core virtues in Judeo-Christian traditions. Biblical literature develops the theme of the close relationship between God and the sojourner as the model of hospitality. The patriarchal stories of the Old Testament give us wonderful examples of this relationship between God and the stranger. God is encountered in the stranger and the stranger brings good news from God as in the case of Abraham and Sarah receiving the good news of the birth of their son Isaac. (Genesis 18:1-15; 19:1-11; 24:14-61).

Hospitality makes strangers friends; take away fears, doubts and suspicions; bring peace into troubled minds and hearts; moves people toward each other; helps people reach out in service; challenges people to share their possessions and experiences and much more! The places where the early Christians gathered to worship were characterized by "domestic" hospitality, which included washing of the feet, care of the sick, welcoming strangers, sharing food, care of widows and orphans and so on. Hospitality creates space where the friend can enter and feel comfortable and the stranger can enter and become friend.

I have heard the story of a woman, waiting at an airport one night. With several long hours before her flight, she hunted for a book in the airport shop, bought a bag of cookies and found a place to sit. She was engrossed in her book, but happened to see, that the man beside her, as bold as could be, grabbed a cookie or two from the bag between, which she tried to ignore, to avoid a scene. She read, munched cookies, and watched the clock. As the gutsy "cookie thief" diminished her stock. She was getting more irritated as the minutes ticked by. Thinking, "If I wasn't so nice, I'd blacken his eye!" With each cookie she took, he took one too.

When only one was left, she wondered what he'd do. With a smile on his face and a nervous laugh, he took the last cookie and broke it in half. He offered her half, as he ate the other. She

snatched it from him and thought, "Oh brother, this guy has some nerve, and he's also rude, he didn't even show any gratitude!" She had never known when she has been so galled and sighed with relief when her flight was called. She gathered her belongings and headed for the gate, refusing to look back at the "thieving ingrate."

She boarded the plane and sank in her seat, then sought her book, which was almost complete. As she reached in her baggage, she gasped with surprise: There was her bag of cookies!!! "If mine are here," she moaned with despair, "then the others were his and he tried to share!"

Too late to apologize... too late to share... too late to welcome the gift of the stranger... too late to be hospitable...too late to make the stranger a friend! Hospitality is not just about welcoming people in our homes. Being hospitable is about how we are present wherever we may be. Being hospitable is a way of being and becoming neighbor to those around us! It is a way of stepping out of self - moving from self-absorption and self-preoccupation and reaching out to care for the needs of others.

Remember the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:25-37). The priest and the Levite were preoccupied with themselves, their needs and their concerns. The Samaritan, a foreigner and a stranger, stepped out of himself, reached beyond himself and became a neighbor to the man in need. This parable challenges us to recognize the neighbor in those in need and hospitality is a way of reaching out to those in need. Hospitality seeks not "who my neighbor is" but "to whom I shall be a neighbor", not "who welcomes me" but "whom I may welcome."

Hospitality has become a very difficult and troublesome virtue in the modern world where a culture of suspicion has been developing over many years. We are no longer encouraged to welcome strangers. On the contrary, we are often taught to be suspicious and even afraid of strangers and aliens and keep them at a distance! A stranger is someone whose heart we have not met yet. There is a friend and a stranger in all of us – we remain friends and strangers all at the same time. But we strive to embrace the best that each one brings and tame the stranger into a friend. When we share our home, our space with others, we are not just sharing a sofa, or a room, or even good food. We are offering a piece of ourselves, a piece of our lives to another person and that is a sacred thing. Showing hospitality whether it be to your family, friends, neighbors, church members, or a stranger is a way for us to extend the hand of the Lord to another person. It is a chance to show someone else that we really care.

During the coming week, try to notice the stranger. Speak a kind word to the stranger that you notice. Think well of strangers and send them a blessing. Have good and noble thoughts and speak kind and blessing words. Be hospitable and be a friend of the world around you!

God bless you and your family.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

Scroll down to read the reflections on the Scripture readings of today's mass....

Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

June 28, 2026

Christianity means giving witness to Christ every day.

**Christianity is not a school of ideas or a collection of beautiful temples and lovely art; it is a living people who follow Jesus and give witness to him every day. A Christian who doesn't give witness is unfathomable. We are not a religion of ideas, of pure theology, of beautiful things and commandments. We are a people who follow Jesus Christ and give witness -- that is, want to give witness to Jesus Christ and this witness sometimes ends up being giving one's life.
(Pope Francis)**

Collect

O God, who through the grace of adoption
chose us to be children of light,
grant, we pray,
that we may not be wrapped in the darkness of error
but always be seen to stand in the bright light of truth.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Liturgy of the Word

Prayerfully read the first reading and then read my reflections below and spend a few moments of personal reflection. Do the same with Responsorial Psalm and other readings.

**Silence, solitude and stillness as prerequisites for finding peace
and serenity.**

2 Kings 4:8-11, 14-16

The woman of Shunem recognized Elisha as a "Holy man of God" and offered him hospitality. Hospitality is not only a virtue but also a sacred duty. This excerpt tells us that the woman was blessed with the gift of a child as a reward for her hospitality.

Psalm 89

Psalm 89 forms a doxology, a liturgical formula of praise as a fitting conclusion to the third book of the Psalms. The whole psalm expresses the miracle of God's Love for His people. The author

has discovered God as “steadfast Love” and he must now teach what he has discovered to the young people in his charge and urge them to tell their children and children’s children. God fulfills His promises because he is steadfast love.

**I will sing of your mercy forever, LORD
proclaim your faithfulness through all ages.
For I said, “My mercy is established forever;
my faithfulness will stand as long as the heavens.**

Romans 6:3-4, 8-11

In his letter to the Romans, Paul has been expounding on God’s gracious gift of justification through Grace and by faith. In chapter six, he began to explore the theme of “sanctification”. Those who are justified by God through baptism into Christ are thereby empowered and called to live a holy or sanctified life. In this excerpt, Paul reminds his readers that they were baptized (immersed, incorporated) into the death as well as into the life of Jesus. The immersion into death is a death to the old self and a death to sin. Just as death has no power over Christ, sin has no power over the believer. The baptized believer lives by the power of grace..... lives a sanctified life.

Mathew 10:37-42

In chapter ten, Mathew gives us a good and detailed record of the instruction Jesus gave his disciples as he prepared them for their work in the service of the Gospel. He told them what was expected of them and what it would cost them. He told them that they would have to struggle and make sacrifices as they respond to his call to service. Following him would cost them a lot. He also assured them that God’s care, protection and love would follow them on their journey.

In this excerpt Jesus spoke about those whom the disciples were sent to serve. God sent Jesus; Jesus sent his disciples; whoever welcomes the disciples sent by Jesus welcomes Jesus and God and whoever refuses the disciples refuses Jesus and God. It is a holy thing to welcome messengers of God...welcoming messengers of God is in fact welcoming God himself. The Jews believed that receiving a person’s messenger was the same as to receiving the person himself. Paying respect to the ambassador was the same as paying respect to the king who sent him. To honor a man of God or a messenger of God is to honor the God who sent him.

We cannot all be preachers, teachers, prophets and priests. We cannot all proclaim God’s word or give a great sermon or write spiritual books. But we can all be hospitable, give a simple welcome to men and women of God, to those who are proclaiming God and God’s ways.

In this excerpt Jesus tells us that those who offer the simple gift of hospitality to God’s messengers will receive no less a reward than the messengers themselves. Hospitality was one

of the central virtues in Judeo-Christian traditions. Remember Abraham's hospitality to strangers who brought him the gift he was waiting for: good news about the birth of his son. Remember the story of Jesus in the house of Martha and Mary. Hospitality is at the heart of the Christian message.

Be hospitable. Hospitality is not only a virtue but also a sacred duty.

Saint of the Day, June 28 - St. Irenaeus and 13 other saints are remembered this day.

Irenaeus was a Greek from Smyrna in Asia Minor, born during the first half of the 2nd century, probably between the years 120 and 140. Unlike many of his contemporaries, he was brought up in a Christian family rather than converting as an adult.

During the persecution of Marcus Aurelius, the Roman Emperor from 161–180, Irenaeus was a priest of the Church of Lyon. The clergy of that city, many of whom were suffering imprisonment for the faith, sent him in 177 to Rome with a letter to Pope Eleutherius concerning the heresy of Montanism. While Irenaeus was in Rome, a persecution took place in Lyon. Returning to Gaul, Irenaeus succeeded the martyr Saint Pothinus and became the second bishop of Lyon.

During the religious peace which followed the persecution of Marcus Aurelius, the new bishop divided his activities between the duties of a pastor and of a missionary. Almost all his writings were directed against Gnosticism. The most famous of these writings is *Adversus haereses* (*Against Heresies*). Irenaeus alludes to coming across Gnostic writings, and holding conversations with Gnostics, and this may have taken place in Asia Minor or in Rome.

The Church is fortunate that Irenaeus was involved in many of its controversies in the second century. He was a student, well trained, no doubt, with great patience in investigating, tremendously protective of apostolic teaching. Instead of proving his opponents wrong, he tried to win them by providing greater understanding. He maintained a very positive attitude toward all and called everyone to praise God by being good and doing good: "The glory of God is man fully alive", he says. The circumstances and details about his death, like those of his birth and early life in Asia Minor, are not at all clear.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

**Do not spoil what you have by desiring what you have not.
Just be grateful for what you have and let them bless you with joy.**