

SAID ED April 9, 2017

Holy Week Hospitality

One of the core qualities of our parish community is hospitality. It's at the center of the gospel; it's the reason why many people join our parish and now happily call themselves members. The Scriptures are filled with stories about the blessings that come to people because of hospitality shown and received. We are called to be no less hospitable. With Holy Week now upon us we'll be joined by many visitors and people whom we see less regularly. This is a wonderful opportunity to offer gracious hospitality

Hospitality is so much more than just smiling and welcoming people at the door - as important as that is. In *Music and Liturgy* magazine, Aureliea Hangstrom offers some wonderful thoughts about the virtue of hospitality. First of all, hospitality understood in the life of Jesus' "table fellowship" gives way to a spirituality of openness, receptivity, communion and engagement that can transform our lives as the church.

So what are the major components of the **spirituality of hospitality**?

- To be authentically Christian, the spirituality of hospitality must have the Pascal Mystery at its heart. The mystical participation in the dying and the rising of Jesus is a hallmark of any Christian spirituality. See Roman 6:3-11; 8:14-18. Those who practice the spirituality of hospitality experience the death and the resurrection of Jesus through the mysterious workings of God's grace.
- The values and attitudes of a spirituality of hospitality reflect the kingdom of God itself, which is the opposite of the world's priorities. Where as the world promotes power, possessions and domination, the kingdom of God is characterized by powerlessness, poverty and service (Mark 10:45). The way of the world promotes independent self sufficiency, but the way of the kingdom admits a life of the interdependency. Therefore recognizing the interdependency of our existence is the second component of spirituality hospitality.
- The third basic component of a spirituality of hospitality is "kenosis" or self-emptying. Kenosis is seen in the incarnation when God became flesh and on the cross when Jesus emptied himself to the point of death (see Philippians 2:5-11). The kenosis of Jesus is generates a kind of power, but not power in the worldly sense. Jesus' kenosis is the power of love. This Love is not an oppressive or a tyrannical or dominating power. Love that is motivated by kenosis is a liberating, life-giving power. Power according to the Pascal mystery is not something to be retained or withheld: it is relational and self sacrificing, it envisions mutuality and reciprocity.
- The spirituality of hospitality must also include the **reality of communion**, i.e. relationship with God and others. This reality is the work of the Holy Spirit. The spirit brings fellowship and communion and thereby gives new forms to relationships and structures in the kingdom.

The spirituality of hospitality then is the way of God. Hospitality to the stranger is "shorthand" for a whole way of life in Christ. I think we can be justifiably proud of the wonderful ways in which we welcome others into our midst. As we approach the Sacred Mysteries of Holy week when many folks will visit us, may we welcome the stranger, the visitor and the seeker in our midst with open hearts and joyful spirits!

Enjoy this Holy Week and please join in our common prayer whenever possible.
