

## The Virtue of Hospitality

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### “HAS GOD FOUND A HOME IN ME?”

The Father knocks at my door, seeking a home for his Son.

“Rent is cheap,” I say.

“I don’t want to rent. I want to buy,” says God.

“I’m not sure I want to sell, but you might come in to look around.”

“I think I will,” says God.

“I might let you have a room or two.”

“I like it,” says God. “I’ll take the two. You might decide to give me more some day.  
I can wait.”

“I’d like to give you more, God, but it’s a bit difficult. I need some space for me.”

“I know, but I’ll wait. I like what I see.”

Hmmm, maybe I can let you have another room. I don’t really need that much.”

“Thanks, I’ll take it. I like what I see.”

I’d like to give you the whole house.....but I’m not sure.”

“Think on it,” says God. “I wouldn’t put you out. Your house would be mine, and my  
Son would live in it. You’d have more space than you’ve ever had before.”

“I don’t understand at all.”

“I know, but I can’t tell you about that. You’ll have to discover it for yourself. That  
can only happen if you let me have the whole house.”

“A bit risky,” I say.

“Yes,” says God, “but try me.”

“I’m not sure – I’ll let you know.”

“I can wait,” says God.....”I like what I see.”

(by Sister Margaret Halaska, O.S.F.)

This is the first and primary meaning of hospitality: inviting the Lord into our heart.

The second is seen in our First Reading today from the Second Book of Kings and from one of the teachings by Jesus in the Gospel. In Kings the prophet Elisha is treated kindly by a couple who lived in a town far from his own. The woman of the house, who is both thoughtful and resourceful, and well to do, convinces her husband to invite the prophet to dine with them when he comes to their city.

Not only that but she eventually goes a step further: “I know that Elisha is a holy man of God,” she tells her husband, “Since he visits us often, let us arrange a little room for him in our home with a bed, table, chair, and lamp.” **I like this woman!**

In my life as a Jesuit I have been blessed with this kind of hospitality. As I reflected on this passage from Kings I couldn’t help but recall with gratitude a variety of families with whom I have stayed: in San Diego Los Angeles, and Tijuana, Mexico,

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in Alberta, Canada, Oregon, Las Vegas, and here.

Hospitality is a gift and a virtue. There is a sacredness in welcoming another into your home. Jesus adds the spiritual dimension to this practice: "Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me."

I learned a hard lesson on this when I lived at Holy Trinity Mission in Southern Alberta, Canada. One day while I was typing away on a book the doorbell rang. "Who can that be?" I asked myself, not a little annoyed at being interrupted. No one had called to set up an appointment! It was a parishioner in need of some spiritual counseling.

The second time this happened, a few days later, I thought "what if that is Jesus at the door?" From then on, I peacefully dropped whatever I was doing and attended to the person. Turned out making an appointment ahead of time was rare for that community!

There is reciprocity in hospitality. The host is blessed in some way by the guest. That was certainly what happened for me at the Mission. Jesus says "Whoever receives a righteous person because he or she is righteous will receive a righteous person's reward." Not everyone will receive what the couple in the first reading received: a baby boy! But something.

## CONCLUSION

*Lord Jesus, from the start you invited  
ordinary people to come to where you live.  
When they came you welcomed them and  
called them to labor and rejoice with you.*

*Teach me to imitate your welcoming  
hospitality. May my heart be open to  
those you send me.*

*And may my heart be always open to  
You.*

## AMEN

2 Kings 4:8-11, 14-16a Psalm 89:2-3, 16-19 Romans 6:3-4, 8-11 Matthew 10:37+

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