



Hospitality

I was a stranger and you welcomed me. —Jesus (Mt. 25:35b)

Photo: Pineapple Supply Co.

Practicing Hospitality

... **with Christ** The old Reformation hymn asks “O Lord how shall I meet you, how welcome you aright?” Carmelite Reformer and mystic, Teresa of Avila advises us to “settle ourselves in stillness and we will come upon him in ourselves.” Perhaps, she had been thinking of the Psalmist charge to “Be still and know that I am God” (46:10). Yet, in truth, how many still moments do we truly have in our lives? Our calendars reflect the craziness of our lives. Perhaps, keeping a year of welcome begins with allowing ourselves time apart with God in Christ, a daily moment of stillness simply to be and delight ourselves in the Lord.

... with One Another Often hospitality is understood to be synonymous with “friendliness.” While not mutually exclusive, hospitality calls us to a deeper investment of self than simple friendliness demands. Hospitality calls us to share our stories, with both laughter and tears. Hospitality pulls us into a deeper relationship with God and one another. But how often do we take the time to share our stories with one another? How often do we offer the gift of self made available through attentive listening and unhurried presence? Our stories matter. Our faith lives matter. Let us offer one another the gift of hospitality through the sharing of our respective journeys and hearts’ yearnings.

... with the Stranger in our Midst Jesus makes clear that offering hospitality is a moral imperative (see Matthew 25) and that our fears do not excuse us from welcoming the stranger in our midst. It is interesting to note that the word for “stranger” in Greek (*xenos*), also means “guest” and “host.” In fact, the koine Greek word for hospitality (*philoxenia*) literally translates as “a love of guests or strangers.” How might our lives change if we dared to greet each person we meet as Christ in the stranger’s guise? Scripture is clear: we are to “extend hospitality to strangers” even as we “contribute to the needs of the saints” (Romans 12:13). It has been said that a church which is serious about hospitality is serious about mission. It’s as simple as putting food in the eating place, drink in the drinking place, and music in the listening place.

The Celtic Rune of Hospitality

I saw a stranger yesterday.
 I put food in the eating place,
 drink in the drinking place, and
 music in the listening place.
 And, in the sacred name of the Triune God,
 He blessed myself and my house,
 my cattle and my dear ones.
 As the lark says in her song,
 often, often, often goes the Christ
 in the Stranger’s guise.