

16th Sunday in Ordinary time (C)
(Genesis 18:1-10 / Luke 10:38-42)
20.07.2025
Hospitality

Dear brothers and sisters,

Where is God?

God has made a covenant of love with his people, with each one of us. He manifests his loving and saving presence to us in many ways.

God manifests his love to us by his Word which is always offered to us through the Holy Scriptures. Our God is a loving God who speaks to us and listens to us.

God manifests his love to us through the sacraments of the Church. By our baptism, we became children of God, members of his body the Church, temples of the three persons of the Holy Trinity.

In the Eucharist, the Lord gives his body as food to us, a food which nourishes our life and strengthens us; he gives also his blood as drink to us, a drink which quenches our thirst and rejoices our heart.

In the sacrament of reconciliation, the Lord forgives our infidelities to his covenant of love.

God manifests his love to us through the beauty of creation which he confides to our care. God manifests his love to us through the intimate prayer of our hearts, in which he initiates a conversation with us, a conversation that He will never put an end to. The ball is in our court. It is up to us not to lose it.

The Lord manifests his love for us through one another. We were created in his image and likeness. There is something of God in each one of us. In other words, the Lord manifests his loving presence to us through **the hospitality**, the openness of heart we offer to one another. The theme of hospitality is the theme common to the two readings we have heard this morning.

Today's first reading from the book of Genesis tells us clearly that the practice of hospitality in regard to those who come our way is an opportunity for us to meet with the Lord. Our every meeting can be a source of blessing.

The text begins with these strong words: "The Lord appeared to Abraham at the Oak of Mamre while he was sitting by the entrance of the tent during the hottest part of the day. He looked up, and there he saw three men standing near him". ...The Lord appeared to Abraham... He saw three men standing near him! At this point, we are given a detailed narrative of the rite of hospitality offered to these three men by Abraham. The consequence is that these three men (God himself, according to the text) promise Abraham that his wife Sarah who is old and barren will give birth to a son in the coming year. This is what happened. The message is clear: When we offer hospitality to someone, even to someone unknown to us, we offer hospitality to God, and it is a source of blessing in our life. Let us reflect on that statement.

In the chapter 53 of his Rule for monks entitled "The reception of guests", St Benedict writes: "All guests who present themselves are to be welcomed as Christ, for he himself will say: I was a stranger and you welcomed me". Benedict refers to the scene of the Last Judgment found in Matthew 25 and proposes this to be the reason why hospitality offered is a source of blessing: in

Matthew 25 Jesus identifies himself with the stranger. When we receive a stranger, it is Christ we welcome! And we cannot receive Christ without being blessed by his coming to us.

Created as we were in the image and likeness of God, when we look at another, we should see a reflection of God in that person; when we serve another, it is God whom we serve. Commenting on this chapter of the Rule, Esther de Waal writes: "If we are really to receive everyone as Christ, that means that we must respect each as made in the image of God and not in the image of ourselves. And this particular piece of idolatry is all too easy". What the author means here is that if we receive others, it should be for their sake and not just for our own. When we receive others this should help them to become more and more themselves and not to ask them to become replicas of ourselves. Esther de Waal continues: "St Benedict faces us with two very simple questions: When we give hospitality, "do we see Christ in the guest? Does the guest see Christ in us"? There is no escape to that dual question.

What is true in monastic life is true also in our family lives, in our places of work or leisure. Do we see Christ in the stranger? Does the stranger see Christ in us?

To receive someone confided into our hands, to welcome another with our heart and mind, is always a source of blessing, if we look at them with a regard of faith, if we discern God's presence, God's image in them, but it is not always as simple as that. We have a natural tendency to be self-centred and not to like to be disturbed by others. The fact that others are different than we are is a source of fear for us. The unknown, the unfamiliar fills us with fear. But in one way or another, God is present in the stranger who suddenly appears in our lives. Our welcoming others is one of the ways whereby the Lord reveals his existence to us, one of the ways whereby he manifests his presence and his love to us.

In the gospel passage we have just heard, when we see Martha and Mary offering hospitality to Jesus, we discover that there is a double dimension to the practice of hospitality: we give something and we receive something. Martha offers practical hospitality to Jesus, and Mary receives something from Jesus, her guest. We are called not only to give to others but also to receive from them. To give is easier than to receive. When we give, we are in charge, we are in control. When we receive, we are not in control, we do not take the initiative, we are vulnerable, and so understandably we can be afraid. Our fear is fear of the unknown... Nevertheless the gospel tells us that it was Mary who had chosen the better part. When we give hospitality, the better part is what we receive from the other. Those who are used to listening to others will tell you that, very often, they receive more than they give to those who come to them awaiting a word of consolation or guidance from them.

Let us ask the Lord to transform the way we see others, to purify the regard we pose upon them so that we may acknowledge his presence in them. May our regard upon each other be more and more a regard of faith! Where is God? God is, among many other places, in the stranger who passes by our way.