

Homily for the 13th Sunday in Ordinary Time, June 28, 2020

Our theme today is *hospitality*. Hospitality has always been the mark of a believer in God. There are many examples of it found in Sacred Scripture. For example, in the Book of Genesis Abraham welcomes three strangers and one of them was actually God, himself and because of Abraham's generosity, his wife Sarah, who was presumed to be sterile, gives birth to a child she names *Isaac*. This name means *I was laughing* for she thought she would never have a child. In St. Luke's Gospel the Virgin Mary accepts the invitation which the Angel Gabriel announces to her to be the mother of God. She declares: "*Be it done to me as you have said.*" In St. John's Gospel in the scene of the women at the Samaritan well, the people invite Jesus to stay with them and because of this invitation they become believers. And St. Paul in his three missionary journeys is given great hospitality in almost all the places he stops to preach.

Hospitality in our own nation is a very part of our heritage. Think of the hospitality we celebrate on Thanksgiving when we recall the generosity of the native Indians who shared their knowledge with the Pilgrims making it possible for them to successfully survive in this new land. Also, think of the Statue of Liberty which sits in the harbor of New York to welcome and greet newcomers to America. It has etched on it the words of Emma Lazarus: "*Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses, yearning to be free .. send these homeless, tempest-tossed to me, I lift up my lamp beside the golden door.*" So today, we need to remember once again our call to hospitality as both Christians and as Americans.

Our first reading from the Second Book of Kings begins with a delightful story of hospitality. Elisha, the prophet is welcomed into the home of a wealthy couple in Shunem. The wife asks her

husband to add a special room on the roof of their house and furnish it with a bed, a chair and a table and lamp for the prophet to use when he visits them in the future. In gratitude for this hospitality when Elisha discovers that this couple is barren, he prays to God for them and with God's blessing they are rewarded with the birth of a child. The idea of making room for a guest is one that many of us have experienced. Remember when we were children and our parents asked us to give up our room for a visiting relative or friend! What a great lesson in hospitality that was for us, right!

In our Gospel today Matthew tells us about the final instructions Jesus gave his disciples before he sends them on a mission to teach and heal in his name. He tells them to depend on the hospitality of the people they visit. "*Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives a prophet because he is a prophet, will receive a prophet's reward.*" This reminds me that not too long ago I celebrated the funeral of a friend of mine who will always be remembered for his loving care of the poor and the homeless.

In St. Paul's Letter to the Romans today he tells us why we are called to be so generous. Namely, we were baptized into Christ. Hence, we have become other Christs called to imitate his love and generosity in how we live our faith.

Finally, on a personal note I have always been inspired with the loving hospitality and warmth shown to priests. People love us and invite us into their homes, make us a part of their lives and are so generous to us. I am ever grateful for this generosity and say once again to all who have done this: THANK YOU.