

Excerpts form "Hospitality Inside the Monastery" by Maria del Mar Albajar-Vinas, OSB
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For us to welcome one another is our vocation, our very vocation.

Hospitality is the mutual acceptance that we offer each other to support ourselves in our unique way of being and, in this way, to create a community.

1. Human relationships, like all human reality are a gift and a chore. For this chore, there are tools that make the chore easier to understand and manage. Just as knowing the rules of the road helps you to reach your destination without accidents or injuries, knowing the tools of communication improves understanding among people and helps you avoid unnecessary wounds.
2. We are different, and each way of being is equally good. There is no personality type that is better than another and everybody can contribute, from his or her own way of being, to the good of a group.
3. It is necessary to know the universe of the other person and share our own to be able to understand each other. Relationships require our time and dedication in order to work.
4. Relationships improve by improving the relationship. By that I mean that the solution is always a good relationship. We cannot do without relationships; what we need to improve is their quality. A wounded relationship is healed by a healthy relationship.
5. Relationship is an adventure where I leave my safe and well-known starting point, which is not easy, and get into a new, wider landscape from which I will emerge different and enriched.

Hospitality Toward All Is Peace: Benedict's Proposal

Peace is the fruit of a type of relationship that favors a free growth of the person, in all its aspects, without obstacles. First, it is the fruit of a type of relationship, so it is not a personal or individual condition that we can reach by isolating or protecting ourselves, nor by eliminating other people. On the contrary, it is what occurs when we establish a certain relationship with others. Peace and well-being are not something we can possess or acquire; they are not the result of getting something or the consequence of things being as they are. Peace and happiness are not the result of hard work either, nor of my personal success. Peace is not the result of removing problems or the sisters who cause them but the result of the way I mix with them.

...Peace is the result of a way or relating to each other that favors the full development of each person; it is a kind of relation to one another that enables the free growth of the person in all his or her aspects without obstacles. Peace does not restrict, control, or dominate the minds, it does not make people drowsy, it does not tame people. Peace is a type of relationship that revitalizes the uniqueness of people, promoting their capacities.

Peace is inclusive or it is not peace. There is no peace if someone is left aside. If my peace, my faithfulness to myself, leads me to not take responsibility for a [staff member], that so called personal peace is not peace. I am half way, I have not yet arrived. If the type of relationship I maintain with a [staff member] leads me to lose touch with my deep desire, that relation does not promote peace either; that peace is not real peace.

The type of relationship that promotes peace is what we call hospitality. Hospitality is the relationship that recognizes the person, accepts her as she is, looking after her, accompanying her, and letting her walk her own path, the path of being and becoming herself, who each of us is.

Hospitality in the Community

We have seen that relationships with others begin to suffer when the person loses the connection, the trust with her own interior. Hospitality starts being difficult when we lose the connection and the trust with the other and/or with ourselves and we replace it with our analysis and judgments. Then, instead of seeing and recognizing [the staff member], I see the [staff member] of my interpretations, an image of her according to my fears and demands. I lose contact with her, with myself, and with life--and therefore, also with God.

To accept a [staff member] is to recognize who she is with her particular way of understanding life and respond to her--looking after her and giving her the space she needs to walk the path of being who she is. I can do this if I do it with myself, if I do not lose contact with myself and trust and nurture my way of being who I am.

"Love the other as you love yourself" does not mean to give the other what you give yourself. What can be a help for you may be disastrous for the others, and vice versa. To love the other as you love yourself means to recognize the uniqueness of the other, the worth of the other, as you recognize your uniqueness and worth, and to let her be who she is as you allow yourself to be who you are.

Hospitality is the capacity of recognizing the other as other and offering her the space of a relationship, of my love, so she can recognize herself, open herself to alterity, and again take up the path to being herself.

Hospitality Toward Myself

Of no less importance is the capacity to be a guest. Hospitality is also the capacity of allowing myself to be accepted, of permitting myself to be looked after, accompanied and liberated to walk my own path.

In fact, hospitality toward [the staff] is only possible if I am able to welcome myself and allow others to welcome me. "Love the other as you love yourself" is at the same time a gospel commandment and a realization. As a commandment, it is God exhortation to love others as I love myself because love is something we share because we all have received it. In our case, it is the exhortation to welcome others as I welcome myself. Love, hospitality, is an act of freedom, an act exercised by a free person. "Love the other as you love yourself" as a realization is the experience that the limits we impose on our capacities to welcome ourselves just as we are, are the same limits we impose when we welcome others just as they are. We can extend hospitality to another in the measure that we are capable of extending it to ourselves.

In the same way that hospitality toward [staff] means to recognize and value who she is, with her particular way of understanding and response to life--to look after her and allow her the time and space she needs to walk the path of being who she is--just so hospitality toward myself means to recognize and value who I am, with my particular way of understanding and responding to life--to look after myself and give myself the time and space that I need to walk the path of being who I am. Hospitality toward [staff] is only possible to the extent that I live hospitality toward myself.

The Hospitality of God

Hospitality toward others and myself ends, starts, and is nurtured in the hospitality of God.