

## **The Spiritual Practice of Hospitality Saint Raphael Parish**

*All guests who present themselves are to be received as Christ, who said, "I was a stranger and you welcomed me." (Mt 25:35)*

Benedictine hospitality goes further than welcoming the stranger at the door. It is an attitude of welcome to everyone we meet, whether the first or second or thousandth time. Even within the community or family, time after time we are strangers to one another asking for entrance.

*Great care and concern are to be shown in receiving poor people and pilgrims because in them more particularly Christ is received. (Rule of Benedict, Chapter 53, The Reception of Guests)*

The following is taken from *How to Live* by Judith Valente:

"A sign I saw years ago at a Protestant church read: *Whoever Enters Here Is A Stranger But Once.*" The Benedictine way of hospitality extends in particular to those who are ill or weak: *Care of the sick must rank above and before all else so that they may truly be served as Christ, who said, "When I was sick you visited me" (Mt 25:36) and "What you did for one of these least of my people you did for me." (Mt 24:40)*

The more I think about hospitality, the more I realize that it isn't only a matter of courtesy. It isn't only what we do for others. There is such a thing as hospitality of mind. How open am I to new ways of thinking, new ideas that knock at the door of my mind? Benedictine hospitality calls on me to question whether I am at home enough in my own beliefs to disagree with others without feeling betrayed by them.

For Benedictines, hospitality isn't an abstract concept or merely a matter of etiquette. It is an integral part of spiritual life.

For Reflection:

What does hospitality mean to me?

Who are my role models for hospitality? What are my memories of them?

How can I play a small role in welcoming the stranger in my midst, perhaps a refugee, an undocumented immigrant, or any newcomer?

Could I make time in my schedule to help the poor by volunteering at our parish food pantry?