

The Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Theme: Hospitality

Introduction

Our readings this week begin with a wonderful story about the prophet Elisha from the Second Book of Kings. If you remember, Elisha was Elijah's protégé. On one of Elisha's journeys he came to the city of Shuman where he was warmly received by a generous lady. She knew he carried the presence of God's prophetic Spirit so she invited him to stay with her and her husband anytime he was passing through the area. Elisha wanted to do something for her in return. He found out that she and her husband did not have any sons and that child bearing time was over. This was a serious situation because it was up to sons to care for their parents in their declining years. Elisha prophesied that God would reward her by giving her a son. The prophesy was fulfilled.

Hospitality was one of the great virtues of the Bible. The ancients believed that each person should be welcomed as though one

was welcoming God himself. Jesus moves this virtue into Christian times in today's Gospel. Whoever receives you receives me and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me.

The virtue of hospitality is far more than being a good host at a dinner party. Hospitality means encountering the presence of God in others, usually in those whom we least expect.

The people in Jesus' day wasted their opportunity to experience the presence of God because they decided what this presence should be like .So also we miss the presence of God in others because we decide what this presence should be like. We need to let God be God and let God express himself in others, even if this expression is new or even foreign to us.

One of the joys of Catholicism is contained in the very word "catholic" meaning universal The expression of God is universal throughout the church even if this expression is quite different in cultures and individuals.

We don't have to go to extremes of different cultures to experience the wonderful various ways that God is present to us. Within our families children express their faith in a different way to adults. Teenagers express their faith in a different way than either children or adults. Men in a different way than women. Each person in a different way than every other person in the family. A strong family is based on mutual respect. This must be extended to the ways each member communicates with God.

Instead of trying to mold others to experience God exactly as we experience Him, we need to be open to other's expression of his presence. This is really what the virtue of hospitality is all about. If we welcome someone's expression of spirituality which might be different from ours then we will enrich our faith family.

The virtue of hospitality is the virtue of recognizing the presence of God in others and nourishing this presence. When we practice this virtue then the stranger among us is no longer a stranger but a member of the family,

welcome, like Elisha , to enjoy a room in our house ,our church.

Today we pray for an openness to God's presence in ways we least expect. We pray for t

he virtue of hospitality. AMEN