

ENCOURAGEMENT ENCOURAGEMENT

August 2022 – Issue 133

Visitors...

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‘Abraham was sitting at the entrance of his tent during the hottest part of the day, he looked up and saw three men standing there. As soon as he saw them he ran out to meet them. Bowing down to the ground with his face touching the ground he said; Sirs, please do not pass by my home without stopping. I am here to serve you let me bring some water to wash your feet; you can rest beneath the tree. I will bring you a bit of food; it will give you strength to continue your journey. They replied, ‘We accept’. They confirmed what the Lord has told Abraham about Sarah conceiving a child and later he showed them the path forward. They confirmed the message that he had received from the Lord.

(Genesis 18 35:45.)

In our world of ‘virtual presence’ and ‘mass communications’ I wonder if we ever consider the importance of both visiting each other or being visited by someone. It is true that Covid made us very aware of the importance of ‘presence’ and how we all suffered when we were not permitted to entertain people in our own homes. It is also true that we missed eating with others and sharing a meal. Of course, meeting each other and being able to pray together, meeting in this way, also caused us much distress, especially when not able to meet around the table of the Lord. It is worthwhile remembering why this is so important. Is it just that we were all lonely and isolated... well that is true of course, but it is also true that we are bound together as human beings by ties of friendship, communality, and family and it is intrinsic to our human nature to group together?

But as Christians we also add to those meetings another focus and that is of ‘Hospitality’ and ‘Compassion’, Generosity and Peace. In answer to a community member’s question about rôle Ven. Catherine Doherty replied that the essence of rôle is to be “just love; just love....

...Remember that the essence of this love is hospitality, availability, charity, and peace.” (Restoration: July/August 2022)

So how should we approach visiting and being visited and perhaps being a ‘visitor’? It is that meeting of someone in hospital, prison, or for a special social reason that is often given the title of **Visitor**. The word visitor is derived from ‘going to see’ which reminds us of Jesus’ word to Andrew ‘Come and see’... in that case, where he lived. Jesus gave us some very interesting instruction as to how to visit in the way He taught the Disciples but also through His own actions. There is no doubt that He often visited and had a meal with those that were not



acceptable or outsiders or certainly made it clear that they were to be included. To Zacchaeus He made it quite clear that He was going to visit and eat with him, Zacchaeus being the hated tax collector. Jesus was often rebuked by the Pharisees for visiting tax collectors and sinners and

eating with them.

But we also have Jesus visiting good friends such as Martha, Mary and Lazarus. He visited St. Peter’s house curing his mother-in-law and can we forget the wedding attendance at Cana. So visiting was part of Jesus’ way of communicating with people and sharing His message with them, eating was often a crucial part of that encounter. Joy and healing was the other.

But we must look closely at what Jesus told the Disciples about how to approach visiting and especially when imparting the Good News. When He sent out the Disciples and Apostles, He gave them some clear instructions as to what to do or not to do. ‘Travelling light’ would be one way to describe it, with no baggage. He also told them to eat whatever was placed before them in, other word to be grateful and gracious ‘without airs and graces’.

Your God is ever beside you indeed, He is even within you.

St Alphonsus Ligouri

He told them to impart peace and that this would be reciprocated if they were accepted, but to leave if they were rejected or insulted. (Luke 10:4-12) He also told them that they would experience difficulties and be like 'Lambs among Wolves', not to wander about and to be focused on the task at hand. Now if we apply this to ourselves, we also have some pointers as how to be good visitors. Although they were assigned a specific task, is this less so for us, whatever type of visitor we are. Surely, peace is a lovely attribute to bring to anyone's house. Surely, we should be willing to listen and focus on our Hosts. Surely every exchange should indicate to others who we are as Christians. We are also encouraged not to be too selective as to who we visit, especially when there is need. A visit to a sick person or one who is grieving, lonely or troubled is part of our mission. A call on a person in any situation may be a 'life saver' for that person, for we can never be sure what has led a person to a particular situation or what is happening behind the scenes...

Equally we should be open to people who visit us and be welcoming and open even if it causes us some difficulties. Abraham knew how to welcome the passers-by. It is thought that they were 'Angels' There is a mystery about visiting and being visited as sometimes people are sent to us help us and visitors while unexpected, can be giving us a special message even if only to say that someone cares. In 'Hebrews' there is a lovely passage. The writer of Hebrews encourages the early Christians by saying "Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained Angels" (Hebrews 13:2) Angelic visitations are recorded throughout the Bible, and many would testify today of such happenings.

Yet there is one 'Visitor' that we must be very careful to receive with utmost love and care. And that is Jesus Himself. Pondering on the words that we say before we receive The Lord in Holy Communion: 'Lord I am not worthy to receive you under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed'. I thought of the Centurion, an outsider, a Gentile, whose faith was commended by Jesus as extraordinary. He visits us with such care and restores us with His compassion and love. He is the Ultimate Host. He both gives himself to us, receives us, and we have to bow and bend low to receive Him. He is both the Visitor and the Visited as

we speak to Him. With Jesus within us we are called to be 'Hosts' to others that need us, for it is Jesus who invites them through us. As Jesus said 'whatever we do for others, we do it to Him'.

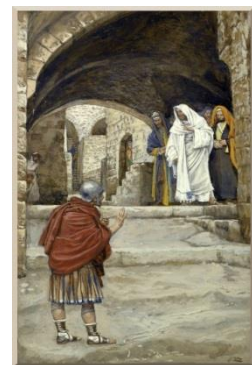
(Matt 25: 35-45) In an extraordinary way this is profoundly true. Therefore, do we really receive Him in a manner that helps us to be Jesus to others? Are the doors of our heart open to Him and to others who need to be visited?
Halina Holman

Pope Francis

"One who serves cannot hoard his free time; he has to give up the idea of being the master of his day," One who serves is not a slave to his own agenda, but rather, is ever ready to deal with the unexpected, ever available to his brothers and sisters and ever open to God's constant surprises. A true servant must train themselves every day to be generous with their lives and their time, realizing that "the rest of the day will not be his own, but given over to others."
Rome 2016

Poem

*Swiftly Time passes, Gently the call comes
Will we be ready, will we be glad
However it comes, Do not fear
Come to me, Come we will hear
Come on the wings of the dawn
Come with gentle step and song
I have a place for you here
Smile and stay beloved
MY place is yours today
This and every day.* HH



Feast Days in August

1st St. Alphonsus Liguori
2nd St. Peter Julian Eymard, 4th St. John Vianney
6th **The Transfiguration of the Lord**
7th **Nineteenth Sunday in Ord. Time**
9th **St. Teresa Benedicta (Edith Stein),**
10th **St. Laurence**
11th St. Claire of Assisi, 12th St. Jane Frances
14th **Sunday - The Assumption B.V.M.**
21st **Twenty-first Sunday in Ord. Time**
22nd **The Queenship of Mary**
24th **St. Bartholomew, Apostle**
26th Bl. Dominic Barberi
27th St. Monica, (28th St. Augustine)
28th **Twenty-second Sunday in Ord. Time**
29th **The Beheading of St. John the Baptist**
30th **Ss. Margaret Clitherow, Anne Line & Margaret Ward**
31st St. Aidan & the Saints of Lindisfarne