

WELCOME



When we die and stand before the Gates of St. Peter, he is not going to ask to see our papers. How we responded to our brothers and sisters will be the question St. Peter asks.

As people of faith we are called to see Christ in every one we meet. As our brothers' and sisters' keeper, we lovingly meet the needs of our neighbors.

As people of faith we believe that we have a duty to welcome the stranger out of charity and respect for the human person, and to be welcoming parishes for immigrants, migrants and refugees.

In the first reading, “the LORD appeared to Abraham ... as he sat in the entrance of his tent.” When Abraham saw three men standing nearby, he ran to greet them; and bowing to the ground, he said: “Sir, if I may ask you this favor, please do not go on past your servant. Let some water be brought, that you may bathe your feet, and then rest yourselves under the tree. Now that you have come this close to your servant, let me bring you a little food, that you may refresh yourselves; and afterward you may go on your way.”

We learn in the footnote that “Abraham addresses the leader of the group, whom he does not yet recognize as the Lord.” Abraham extended welcome, water and food not because it was the Lord but because his religion and culture valued “welcoming the stranger.”

Or, as Pope Francis said, “[A] Christian is someone who has learned to welcome others, who has learned to show hospitality.”

In today's Gospel reading, Jesus was the guest of Martha and Mary. Mary sat beside the Lord at his feet listening to him speak. Martha, burdened with much serving, came to him and complained.

“The Lord said to her in reply, ‘Martha, Martha, you are anxious and worried about many things. There is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part and it will not be taken from her.’”

When Jesus is present, we must set aside our preoccupations and distractions and pay attention to him.

In the Sunday Gospel reading that preceded today's, we were reminded that to love God requires us to love our neighbor. Because God is within each us, when we love our neighbor we love God.

In the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus teaches that everyone is our neighbor. Since everyone is our neighbor and God is within every neighbor, then we cannot withhold our love for anyone without withholding our love for God.

When a neighbor is present we must likewise set aside what we were working on and pay attention to him or her. When we welcome the stranger we welcome the Lord. We have chosen the better part.

(Readings for the 18th Sunday of Ordinary Time)



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