

Over the course of his ministry, Jesus refers to hospitality over thirty times. Today's gospel is one of them. (Matthew 10: 37-42)

When someone talks about something a lot, it usually means that it's important to them. Jesus was no stranger to being rejected and unwelcome. So, he certainly knew the value of being welcomed and accepted.

We live in a time when lots of people live with the fear of being rejected.

-For a long time, lots of folks have experienced rejection because of the color of their skin.

-Others now feel rejected because of their profession. I'm thinking of my friend who works for the Boston Police Department. He tells me he doesn't tell people what he does for a living anymore for fear he'll "be judged."

-I think about the Muslim family that left the town I once lived in because they just couldn't take the hate anymore.

-And others tell me they fear speaking up, stating what they believe for fear that if it isn't considered "politically correct," they'll be mocked and maligned.

It is good to remember that Jesus experienced rejection too. Jesus chose to channel his experiences of rejection into hospitality.

This isn't a Martha Stewart version of hospitality where the dinner napkins match the drapes. This is a hospitality that offers care and refreshment to everyone, especially those who have felt unloved, unwanted.

This kind of hospitality often feels more like a cross than like sipping sangria in the backyard with the neighbors.

It means being a community where love is defined by Christ and not by our families, our preferences or by political parties.

My grandfather was a wonderful man. I think about him every day. But he would often tell me: "Stick with your own kind! Stick with your own kind!" Well, I'm sorry Grandpa, I can't do that. The gospel commands me otherwise. I cannot just "stick with my own kind." (Jesus sure wasn't kidding when he said his brand of love might go against what we were taught at home!)

The hospitality of Jesus commands us to care for those

different from us, those who disagree with us and even those who will never become what we want them to be.

Yeah, sangria in the backyard with family and friends is a lot easier. But Jesus knows that if we just “stick with our own,” nothing changes. The world has little hope of coming together.

The hospitality of Jesus is less about inviting people into a perfect home. It is more about inviting one another into our very imperfect lives.

Let's pray that we will bestow on one another what Christ bestows on us.

Amen.

*Fr. Steven Labaire*