

## Thirteenth Sunday of the Year: HOSPITALITY, June 28<sup>th</sup>.

One of the nicest things in life is to meet an open, friendly, warm, hospitable person. Hospitality is a hallmark of a true follower of Christ. At long last winter ended and spring came, and lockdown was eased up. All along the street the people rejoiced. Many people drew back their curtains and opened up their windows. Fresh air, sunlight, and warmth poured into their homes. 'Thank God for spring! Thank God for the sunshine!' they exclaimed.

Strange how our homes are always open to receive God's sunshine and fresh air, but not always open to receive a child of God, especially when he comes in poverty. Beggars! Homeless people are many these days and are going to increase as many people are unemployed, underemployed, depressed!

Christ urges us to be hospitable. Nowadays hospitality is a very different matter from what it was in the old days when nobody locked their doors. Sadly, those days are gone. Today is the day of locks, bolts, chains, peep holes, alarm systems, dogs. Yet today there is more need than ever for hospitality and friendliness. In the world today there is a lot of loneliness and there are lots of strangers, aliens, and displaced people.

Hospitality to a friend is no big deal. There is no risk involved, and there is every likelihood that the favor will be returned. But hospitality to a stranger is a great thing. You don't owe anything to a stranger, and there is a risk involved. But Christ calls us to welcome the strangers in our midst. To be hospitable does not mean making them like us. It means accepting them as they are. This enables them to shed their strangeness and become members of the community.

Christ calls us to reach out. He said that even a trivial act of kindness, like giving a cup of cold water, would not go unrewarded. But there are earthly rewards too, and very great ones — the growth of understanding, friendliness, and cooperation, things our neighborhoods are crying out for today.

This is the kind of spring we ourselves can cause to visit our homes and streets, a spring which will banish from our midst the winter Of mistrust, fear, and hostility. For the followers of Christ, hospitality is not an optional extra. It is at the very heart of the Gospel. And the ultimate motivation is clear: to welcome the stranger is to welcome Christ himself.

**Hospitality is not so much about open doors as about open hearts.** There is a risk in having an open heart. One can get hurt. But to open one's heart is to begin to live. To close it is to begin to die.

Jesus said, *"If anyone gives you so much as a cup of cold water, he will most definitely not lose his reward"*. To give a cup of cold water is a very small thing. Yet in the desert it could be the difference between life and death. **Which shows that a deed doesn't have to be big in order to mean a lot.**

Few of us are given the chance to perform great deeds. But the chance to give a cup of water can come our way several times in the course of a day. The 'cup of cold water' is a symbol of the small kind deed. Little deeds may not look much, but they can bring peace.

An Australian priest visiting Ireland went into Dublin. That evening he was asked how he found Dublin. He replied, 'Dublin must be one of the few cities in the world where people will hold a door open for you, or will say "Sorry" if they accidentally bump into you, or "Excuse me" if they have to squeeze past you,' was his reply.

The things he referred to were very small in themselves. Yet the accumulation of those little things led him to conclude that Dublin is basically a friendly place. Little flowers may appear to have no scent on their own. But put a bunch of them together and they can fill a room with fragrance.

Deeds don't have to be big in order to be of help and comfort to the person for whom they are done. They just have to have a certain quality. What is this quality? It is warmth. All deeds which come from the heart have this warmth.

The one thing I want to continue discussing all through this time, **is Relationships**; Successful relationships which is lacking in our society today. Simply because we ignore the positive little things that we all possess and focus in negatives, failures which also occurs in all human lives. But in order to achieve a successful relationship in our society today we will need “a cup of cold water” to give to all those we meet on daily basis, by recognizing the positives and **IGNORING** to focus on the negatives that are inevitably going to occur.

There is a wonderful analogy about a honeybee and the fly. It teaches us a valuable lesson to improve our relationships and the quality of life. The honeybee flies from flower to flower, extracting **ONLY** the nectar without disturbing the flower. The mindset of a honeybee is **to seek the essence of each flower**. Even in a place filled with rotting garbage, rather than giving its attention to all the filth, the honeybee *keeps its focus on finding nectar*, and it eagerly flies to even a single tiny flower amidst miles and miles of garbage. In our relationships we have much to learn from the honeybee; **its teaching us the art of focusing on the positives** and dealing appropriately with the faults in each other! There will be faults everywhere and in everyone, there is never a shortage of things to complain about, but just as the honeybee seeks nectar, even in the most unexpected of places, **we can aim to seek the positive qualities in those around us**.

The fly represents another type of mindset in relationship. Although each species can be appreciated for its particular instinctive nature, still, we can study them to learn relevant lessons to improve the quality of our own lives. On the otherwise healthy body, the fly will focus on sucking an infectious scab. The fly may travel over hundreds of flowers, but what does it focus on? It focuses on tasting garbage and excrement! It ignores the sweet fragrance of rose gardens and even in the best of circumstances, and in the tidiest places, **the fly will focus on the trash**.

This represents the mindset of ignoring the good qualities in those around us, and focusing on their faults. It is so easy, it requires no effort to see the flaws in others. Fault finding is a **HABIT**, the more we give in to it, the more we become obsessed by it. In relationships {*not only within the families BUT also in our neighborhoods where we live because there too we interact with each other as neighbors*} it is important to have honest, well-wishing communication, focused on appreciating the positive while dealing with the negatives in a gracious, constructive manner.

Trying to bring out the best in each other. In doing so we learn to recognize the positive qualities within our own self and to overcome unhealthy low self-esteem. Honeybee mentality or fly mentality? The choice is your and mine!