



Seeds of Hospitality

Newsletter of the Institute of Hospitality, West European Province of St. John of God No. 46 February 2012

The Year of the Family of Saint John of God

HOSPITALITY NONE HIGHER DUTY

No Higher Duty

Henri Nouwen, the great spiritual writer was going to a monastery for a retreat. The monks observed vows of silence and the retreat was to be meditative and prayerful. Nouwen was delayed and was late getting to the monastery on that miserable, rainy night. He rang the bell, well after bedtime, and was met at the door by one of the brothers. The brother warmly greeted him, took his wet coat, brought him to the kitchen and made him a cup of tea. They chatted in the late night hours and Nouwen began to relax and feel ready for the retreat. But he knew this monk was supposed to observe silence, so he finally asked him, "Why are you willing to sit and talk with me?"

The monk replied "Of all the duties of the Christian faith and the rules of my Order, none is higher than hospitality."

Rev. J. Burton Williams, The Reward of a Disciple



If you want to become the perfect guest, then try to make your host feel at home."

Growing in Hospitality

If people not familiar with the Value of Hospitality were asked to identify which character traits a good person should possess, which character traits we should be striving to build into our lives, hospitality probably might not be high on the list. It might appear like one of the less important and perhaps even optional virtues, something akin to interior decorating, or flower arranging, or the art of making polite conversation. But that's not how the Bible presents it. In both the Old and New Testaments, hospitality is seen as absolutely essential. For example, Saint Paul identifies it in his letter to Titus as one of the basic qualifications for a pastor or an elder, a non-negotiable requirement for spiritual leadership.

"For since a Church Leader is in charge of God's work, he should be blameless. He must not be arrogant or quick tempered, or are drunkard or violent or greedy for money. **He must be hospitable and love what is good.** He must be self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined." *Titus 1:7-8*

Christ even pointed to the practice of hospitality as evidence that we have come to know him as our Saviour, and a lack of hospitality as evidence that we haven't. In Matthew twenty-five, as he describes the last judgment, he makes this rather startling statement:

"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. *For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in . . . I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the*

least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'

"Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. *For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in . . . I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.'* Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life." *Matthew 25:34-35, 41-42, 45-46*

In other words, hospitality - welcoming the stranger into our hearts and homes, people who don't normally belong there, is a sign of genuine faith. That's kind of sobering, especially if we've been neglecting it. And so, the questions we must ask ourselves today are:

- Why is hospitality so important to me?
- How is this value tied in to the core of my life and the Christian message?
- What does true hospitality consists of and then how can I practice it; what can I do to grow more and more in hospitality?



*Whatever you do to the least
of my brothers and sisters,
you do unto me*

As this is the first Newsletter of the year I take this opportunity to wish you all a happy and hospitable New Year. We are already well into February and the Diary is filling up. We congratulate our Provincial Bro. Laurence on the occasion of his Golden Jubilee of his Religious Profession. The liturgy of the Mass was based on the theme of the Hospitaller Family of St. John of God and we joined with Laurence in renewing his Vows by reciting a Pledge of Hospitality. A version of this Pledge of Hospitality has been used at all Board Meetings as a reflection at the beginning of the meetings. It was very unique ceremony particularly at the end when all were invited to sign the registrar as witnesses to Bro Laurence's renewal of vows. This was a truly unique Hospitaller Family occasion as heretofore only Brothers signed the Registrar. Most of the Hospitallers attending the ceremony signed.

We had six Hospitallers for the first Foundation Programme in January and I feel we all had a good experience over the two days. We look forward to the months ahead meeting people in Stillorgan, Kerry, Malawi, Monze and New Jersey or wherever we are called to go!

Bro. Gregory



Bro Donatus presenting a pomegranate to Bro Laurence



Yvonne Nolan and Martha Fealy signing the Registrar as witnesses to Bro Laurence's renewal of vows



January Group of Hospitallers

FOUNDATION PROGRAMME 2012 at Stillorgan Community House

* January	30 th - 31 st	* February	20 th - 21 st
* March	7 th - 8 th	* April	23 rd - 24 th
* May	14 th - 15 th	* June	25 th - 26 th
* July	30 th - 31 st	* September	3 rd - 4 th
* October	15 th - 16 th	* November	14 th -15 th

- * **Monze, Zambia** 19th - 23rd March (Two 2 Day Foundation Programmes)
- * **Mzuzu, Malawi** 16th March (One Day Seminar for those who completed Foundation Programme)
- * **New Jersey, USA** 4th-5th June for Hospitaller Brothers of Saint John of God (Development Company)

BEST POEM IN THE WORLD

I was shocked, confused, bewildered
As I entered Heaven's door,
Not by the beauty of it all,
Nor the lights or its decor.

But it was the folks in Heaven
Who made me sputter and gasp--
The thieves, the liars, the sinners,
The alcoholics and the trash.

There stood the kid from seventh class
Next to him was my old neighbor
Who never said anything nice.
Who swiped my lunch money twice.

Bob, who I always thought
Was rotting away in hell,
Was sitting pretty on cloud nine,
Looking incredibly well.

I nudged Jesus, 'What's the deal?
I would love to hear your take.
How'd all these sinners get up here?
God must've made a mistake.

'And why is everyone so quiet,
So somber - give me a clue.'
'Hush, child,' He said,
'they're all in shock.
No one thought they'd be seeing you.'

