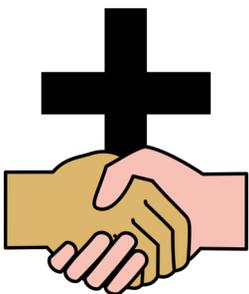


## "What does the Bible say about hospitality?"



Hospitality can be defined as "the quality or disposition of receiving and treating guests and strangers in a warm, friendly, generous way." In the New Testament, the Greek word translated "hospitality" literally means "love of strangers."

Hospitality is a virtue that is both commanded and commended throughout Scripture. . . In the Old Testament, it was specifically commanded by God: "When an alien lives with you in your land, do not mistreat him. The alien living with you must be treated as one of your native-born. *Love him as yourself*, for you were aliens in Egypt" (Leviticus 19:33-34,

During His public ministry, Jesus and His disciples depended entirely on the hospitality of others as they ministered from town to town (Matthew 10:9-10). Likewise, the early Christians also depended on and received hospitality from others (Acts 2:44-45; 28:7). In fact, travelers in ancient times depended heavily on the hospitality of strangers as traveling could be dangerous and there were very few inns, and poor Christians could not afford to stay at them, anyway. This generous provision to strangers also included opening one's home for church services. Hospitality was indeed a highly regarded virtue in ancient times, especially for Christian leaders (Titus 1:8; 1 Timothy 3:2).

The writer of Hebrews reminds us not to forget to "entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it" (Hebrews 13:2). Indeed, in the book of Genesis we read of Abraham's humble and generous display of hospitality to three strangers. Wealthy and aged, Abraham could have called on one of his many servants to tend to the three unannounced visitors. Yet the hospitable and righteous Abraham generously gave them the best he had. And, as it turned out, he had entertained the Lord and two angels (Genesis 18:1-8).

Christians are "God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works" (Ephesians 2:10). As followers of Christ, we emulate His love and compassion when we show hospitality, not only to fellow Christians, but even more so to strangers and the less fortunate. In fact, we honor God when we are kind to the needy (Proverbs 14:31; 19:17). As Jesus said, "When you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed" (Luke 14:13). Christ also taught us the second greatest commandment, to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:39), and the Parable of the Good Samaritan teaches us that "neighbor" has nothing to do with geography, citizenship, or race. Wherever and whenever people need us, there we can be neighbors and, like Christ, show mercy. This is the essence of hospitality.

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus discusses the hospitable behavior of those who will inherit the kingdom: "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 needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me" (Matthew 25:34-36). In these days we often don't think much about entertaining strangers, but hospitality is still an important part of Christian ministry (Romans 12:13; 1 Peter 4:9). By serving others we serve Christ (Matthew 25:40) and we promote the spread of God's truth (3 John 5-8).



**Equipping to Do Your Part**

**ST. ANDREW CATHOLIC CHURCH**

*Ministers of Hospitality*

**We are called to serve!**

Becoming a Minister of Hospitality is a people oriented ministry. You are called to reveal the love and presence of Christ to all who gather for worship on Sunday and at other special liturgies throughout the church year.

**Are you called to be an usher?**



**Tel: 407-293-0730**

# An Usher's Story



**Harry** never considered himself a minister in his parish. “Come on,” he would say, “people who give out the Eucharist, or the lectors, maybe their ministers, but me...I’m just an usher.

A young priest in Harry’s parish had given a talk on the ministry of hospitality (usher), but Harry wasn’t buying that malarkey. He said he was just giving the pastor a hand by taking up the collection, steering people to communion, and saying hello to parishioners when they came into church.

Harry believed that, until one cold March night he came home from work and his wife told him that the pastor had called. When Harry returned the call the pastor told him that a letter had arrived at the rectory simply addressed to “HARRY THE USHER”. The priest said that, since he was the only usher named Harry, the letter must be his.

Harry, intrigued by the information, picked up the letter and on the way home ripped open the envelope. In the dim light of the car he read the following:

**DEAR HARRY,**

“I don’t know your last name, but I guess that’s fair, you don’t know mine either.” I’m Gert, Gert from the 10:30 Mass. I am writing you for a couple of reasons, and I hope you will understand.

“One of the reasons is to ask you a favor. I am not particularly close to the priest in the community, but somehow I feel close to you. I don’t even know how you got to know my first name, but every Sunday morning when I walked into Mass you smiled and greeted me and called me by name. We would exchange a few words that were perhaps meaningless to most—like how bad the weather was, how much you liked my Easter hat, and how late I was on a particular Sunday.



I don’t have any close family left, Harry. My husband has been dead for 16 years and the kids are all scattered. Not too many people smile and greet an old lady like me, but you did.

“Harry, in the little time left to me, I just wanted to say, Thank You”. Thank you for your thoughtfulness, for remembering my name is Gert, for the smiles and the little laughter, the consideration and the conversation.

Now for the favor. I am dying, Harry. My time is running out. It is not important that you come to my wake, but what is important to me is that when they bring me to church for Mass

the last time, you will be standing at the front entrance. It wouldn’t seem right if you weren’t their to say, “Hello, Gert, good to see you.’ “If you are there, Harry, I feel assured that your warm hospitality in my home parish will be duplicated by Peter, Jesus and Mary in my new parish, my new home. I hope they will say as you always did, “Hello, Gert. It’s good to see you.”

“With love and gratitude, Gert”

The lady who wrote that letter was recently buried from her parish church. Harry did stand at the entrance. He smiled and said the words Gert wanted to hear as he gently touched the coffin.

Harry found out it wasn’t malarkey, he had become a minister.

