

16<sup>th</sup> Sunday, Ordinary Time – Year C – 2019 – 7/21/19

It is mid-summer and prime vacation time. Welcome to any visitors we have this weekend. Some of you may be sitting in your tent like Abraham, or some of you may be camping out on the lake, or just passing through and joining us today. Welcome.

In ancient time hospitality was a primary virtue, and this incident with Abraham and Sarah stands as a prime lesson for us today. The letter to the Hebrews says, “Do not neglect hospitality, for through it some have unknowingly entertained angels.” Some suggest the three men who appear to Abraham might be angels or even the Trinity, but in any case, one of them is identified as “Lord.”

We often think of our responsibility to welcome the stranger, but we might also remember that strangers often bring gifts to us. They bring us gifts just by being themselves and sharing a bit of their lives with us. Some bring us more through their **presence** than we could possibly give to them.

What was the meal like? Abraham had Sarah prepare roughly a bushel of flour (40-60 lbs) and ordered a servant to prepare a steer (500 lbs) for a little meat. We proclaim only part of the story of Abraham and Sarah’s hospitality. When the strangers ask where Sarah is, Abraham replies she’s in the tent. But Sarah overhears one of them say that when they return in a year, she’ll have a son. And Sarah laughs or giggles. Sure enough, before a year is out, she has a son, **Isaac**, whose name means **laughter**.

When we hear this reading in conjunction with today’s gospel, the combination invites us to reflect on hospitality, on generosity, on faith and **on the fact that God that God will never be outdone in bestowing love.**

I learned hospitality at Grandma’s Sunday feast. There were more often than not guests invited, plenty of food, and laughter as well as we shared the meal and the **real presence** of each other.

Back to the gospel...the most obvious question we might ask Jesus is why he criticized Martha’s concern for service just after he told the story of the generous Samaritan? He didn’t say the meal service was secondary to the visiting, he simply said that both forms of **presence were important.**

How are we welcoming the immigrants among us? A view that sees immigrants as only a problem or a burden or a threat is simply false. In fact, we are all immigrants. Immigrants have enriched these United States and other countries in countless ways in every generation. Sure, there are a few bad actors in any group, but crime by immigrants is less frequent than crime perpetrated by longtime residents. Immigrants bring personal gifts and gifts of differing cultures. They keep society alive and vibrant.

Fear-mongering and hatred should have no place among us who follow Christ.

So we just can’t sing “All are welcome”, we are called to live “All are welcome” because ALL are children of God, stamped in the image of God. And God is good...all the time. Let us follow God with our hospitality.