

Session 11: Welcome and Hospitality

Proposition Definition: Foster an intentional culture of welcoming and hospitality that seeks to encounter people where they are and open wide the doors to Christ for them.

- Be especially mindful of those who are new, those who are feeling disconnected from the Church, and those who are from different cultures.
- Cultivate awareness among the faithful that all are ministers of hospitality who can help their neighbors feel they belong.

Other Key Points:

- Pope Francis each of us to welcoming in his apostolic exhortation, *Guadete et exultate*: “Each community is called to create a ‘God-enlightened space in which to experience the hidden presence of the risen Lord.’ Sharing the word and celebrating the Eucharist together fosters fraternity and makes us a holy and missionary community. It also gives rise to authentic and shared mystical experiences ... Such experiences, however, are neither the most frequent nor the most important. The common life, whether in the family, the parish, the religious community or any other, is made up of small everyday things. This was true of the holy community formed by Jesus, Mary and Joseph, which reflected in an exemplary way the beauty of the Trinitarian communion. It was also true of the life that Jesus shared with his disciples and with ordinary people.” (GE 142-143)
- Archbishop Hebda writes in his pastoral letter, *You Will Be My Witnesses*, “Jesus’s washing of the feet would have communicated a **radical** hospitality. The focus of the person washing feet has to be purely on the other. We can imitate Jesus only by putting aside the ‘garments’ of our position, our expertise, our self-focus, and even our pride. In attending to the need of the other, we open ourselves to the mystery of the other. In listening, we respectfully receive the other. Jesus teaches us that the simple gift of self opens us to the gift of the other. A communion, a unity, is then created between us through hospitality.” (PL 21)
- Each of us is invited to welcome those in our midst, the marginalized as well as those most familiar to us but perhaps further away from the Lord.
- As Pope Francis says, “Let us not forget that Jesus asked his disciples to pay attention to details. The little detail that wine was running out at a party ... The little detail of noticing the widow who offered her two small coins. The little detail of having spare oil for the lamps, should the bridegroom delay. The little detail of asking the disciples how many loaves of bread they had.” (GE 144).
- To fulfill our vocation to welcoming as Jesus did, we must constantly deepen the interior source of welcoming activity. This means that we must experience more profoundly how Jesus welcomes us. In this way we develop a genuine spirituality of welcoming.
- Together, the blend of interior spirituality of welcoming and of practical wisdom in welcoming will create in our parishes a culture of Christ-like welcoming.

Reflection Questions:

1. What, in your experience, are the best practices for making people feel welcomed?
2. Who within your parish community or circle of influence has the Holy Spirit blessed with a charism of welcoming?
3. Are you called to more in this ministry?