

WELCOMING THE WORD

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In October, the Stewardship Office offered a workshop on the topic of Christian hospitality. We looked at the parable of the sheep and the goats (Matthew 25:31-46) as one of the most important parables for the entire tradition of Christian hospitality. This parable tells us that when we care for the poor—the hungry, the thirsty, a stranger, the naked, the sick, and the imprisoned—we care for Jesus. Moreover, those who welcome strangers welcome Jesus and they themselves are welcomed into the Kingdom of heaven. Following the presentation, groups broke out to discuss how Christians can express a hospitable disposition in various areas of life.

In Advent, we prepare to welcome the Word made flesh at Christmas. Hospitality is really a way of welcoming Jesus in everything that we do. Through the Incarnation, we are invited to participate in the divine life of the Trinity. By cultivating a hospitable disposition, we prepare a welcome for the Word in our lives and extend Christ's welcome throughout the world.

Consider these ways of welcoming the Word at Christmas and all year:

Worship

- Let Sunday liturgy be the pinnacle of your week: arrive on time and stay until the final dismissal.
- Prepare to welcome the Word proclaimed by reading the Scriptures in advance.
- Acknowledge the people around you, both those you know and those you don't know. Look encouragingly upon parents who may be struggling with young children.
- Take a seat towards the middle of the pew. Don't block access by sitting on the end.

Prayer

- Make space in your life and heart to listen to the voice of God.
- Ask God to care for those in need.
- Graciously request and receive the prayers of others.
- Be prepared to respond when God hears your prayer.

Social Life

- Get to know people in your community.
- Find reasons to celebrate and come together. Make personal invitations and invite people on the margins. Make it easy for people to be included by arranging rides, babysitting, and holding events at different times.
- Help people feel they belong by giving them a role in events.

- Move away from the TV and from over-work to spend more time with family, friends, and the community.

Finance

- Give up unnecessary expenses, reduce debt, and simplify your life to cultivate a sense of abundance and gratitude in your life.
- People have a need to give; provide opportunities for people to give.
- Consider the ethical implications of your investments and spending. Commit to socially responsible products.
- Recognise contributions and show transparency and accountability with donations.

Ministry Coordination

- Look for and acknowledge talents in yourself and in others.
- Create opportunities for people to use their gifts and personally invite them to do so.
- Always follow up with people who are offering to help.
- Make it easy for people to help: make the commitment and responsibilities clear, offer formation and training, give ongoing support, show recognition.

Outreach and Evangelisation

- Live your discipleship: "Preach the Gospel and if necessary, use words."—St. Francis of Assisi.
- Talk about your faith life.
- Invite others to church.
- See and serve Jesus in every person, especially those on the margins.