

# DIOCESAN LITURGICAL COMMISSION NEWSLETTER

Fall 2013

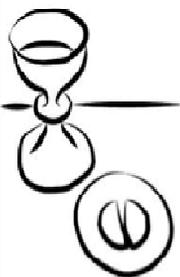
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*Let mutual love continue.*

*Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers,  
for by doing that some have entertained angels  
without knowing it.* Heb. 13:1-2



## HOSPITALITY

The root of hospitality is found in the Scriptures. References can be found in both the Old and New Testaments that illustrate the importance of hospitality towards others. Moreover, it is through extending hospitality to one another that we encounter God himself. Witness, for example Abraham's hospitality to three wayfaring strangers; in an arid, almost barren land Abraham and Sarah share what they have. We, as hearers of this story glimpse the truth of God *incognito* in these strangers. By extending this hospitality to strangers, Abraham and Sarah welcomed God (cf: Genesis 18:1-5)

The Gospels themselves are replete with many examples of hospitality. One of the most poignant of these is Jesus coming to the home of Martha and Mary. In an offer of welcome, of simple hospitality, Martha and Mary received Jesus who, in turn, challenged them to see that hospitality means to be truly present to someone. And in this case the "someone" was Jesus. (cf: Luke 10:38-42 and *America: The National Catholic Review, July, 2013*). Hospitality here, like that shown by Abraham and Sarah, means attention to our guests, offering them the best we can give. By extending this hospitality we encounter Jesus, who reveals himself to us.

We encounter in the New Testament the many meals recorded in the gospels unfolding aspects of Christian hospitality. John's description of the final supper that Jesus shared with his disciples and is proclaimed at the Mass of the Lord's Supper at the Easter Triduum has

been regarded over the centuries as the model for Christian hospitality: 'Do you understand', Jesus said, "if I, then the Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you must wash each other's feet. I have given you an example so that you may copy what I have done for you.' (John 13:13-15)

At the Sunday Eucharist we remember and relive the greatest act of hospitality, Christ's gift of himself as life-giving food and drink. Christian hospitality finds its ultimate meaning and source in Sunday Eucharist. Having actively participated in the Eucharist, Christians are commissioned to go forth modeling this hospitality in daily life. In the first centuries the Church understood that sharing the Lord's hospitality at the Eucharistic table challenged them to share their own table with the poor and needy. Today we are sent from our Eucharistic celebrations to do the same!

Over time Christian hospitality became disconnected from Eucharistic hospitality. We witnessed a time when Catholics *attended* Mass but often *participated passively*. Even the reception of communion was infrequent. The communal sense of liturgy often seemed secondary to individual pious devotions. The liturgical roots of Christian hospitality seemed to have lost their significance for the assembly. The Second Vatican Council restored the emphasis on the communal action of the Church, and consequently the full, conscious and active participation of all in the liturgical assembly.

We know that Christ is present when Christians gather to form the Sunday assembly. This assembly of God's holy people we call the Body of Christ, recognizing and reverencing the presence of Christ in one another..

Hospitality is integral to the Church's rituals and is to flow over into Christian life. Our sacraments, marking significant moments in the life of Christians, are

celebrations of a welcoming and respectful community and require hospitality from the faith community. For example, in *The Rite of Baptism for Children*, the priest says to the candidate: “The Christian community welcomes you with great joy.” Confirmation calls us to harness the gifts of God’s Holy Spirit for the service of the community and the building up of the Body of Christ. Eucharist reminds us that we are bound together as members of the Body of Christ, standing together, knowing that what affects one part of the Body, in joy or sorrow, affects the whole Body. The same hospitality is extended to adults through the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA). In *The Rite of Penance* the ordained leader is to be a model of hospitality for all who desire God’s forgiveness. In *The Rite of Marriage*, the priest and ministers at the door of the Church, or from the altar, “meet the bride and bridegroom in a friendly manner, showing that the Church shares their joy.”

## Ministers of Hospitality

We come from all walks of life – the broken, battered, beaten, the poor, the sick and the isolated, as well as the joyful, expectant and hopeful. Being attentive and hospitable assists all in finding a place of welcome – the young, families with young children, the much less young, the life-long church goers and the searching stranger. All are offered the promise of hope and the life of Christ that abounds in our worshipping community. Ministers of hospitality have the unique ministry of serving by being attentive and present to the community. They work to ensure that when people gather they are greeted, welcomed and invited into the assembly where all are accepted.

One simple way by which real hospitality can be extended (and this may represent a real change of attitude and attentiveness!) is that bulletins ought be distributed as the people leave, not arrive. The greeting may be diminished if the hospitality minister is simply handing out bulletins, not taking the time to be *present* to our people.

Other things that extend our notions of hospitality in a parish are things such as the ministers knowing the location of the nearest telephone, list of emergency numbers, first aid kit and nearest fire extinguisher and where the washrooms are. Do our parishes have a plan for evacuation of the building in the event of an emergency? How can we help those who are in wheelchairs or otherwise infirm?

Hospitality helps shape the liturgical life of a parish. It provides an atmosphere of prayer and helps the community grow closer to one another and to God. Being a minister of hospitality means that we cultivate a deep desire to be present to our people, whatever the circumstance, not just having a list of duties! Those who embody a spirit of hospitality will accommodate any concern presented to them.

## Hospitality and the Assembly

The Assembly is the first and foremost minister of hospitality. Those in the assembly minister to one other, building the Body of Christ. In doing this we need to ask: What kind of hospitality is offered and received at your parish on a weekend? Do people arrive on time? Do they sit up front and move toward the centre of the pew allowing room for others? What do you hear? Are people singing? Are they animated in their responses? Do people really *hear* the proclamation of the Word, or do they read their own missalettes?

Preparation is key to hospitality. If we arrive at Mass at the last minute, unprepared, is it any wonder that we may not feel part of things, and the mass seems not to have anything to offer us. Some prepare by looking over the readings of the day. Others reflect on what happened since they were last at Mass and about what the next day will bring. Preparation includes taking time to dress appropriately and respectfully. In the way we pray, sing, listen, and receive Holy Communion we contribute to the praying of the liturgy.

The hospitality of the assembly is one of the main components of evangelization. How we are attentive and present to one another during our liturgies speaks to the heart of who we are and what we believe. When non-Christians looked at members of the early church they were compelled to exclaim, “*See how they love one another!*” Will people in our world say the same about our celebrations, let alone about how we interact with others in our daily life?

## Hospitality and Music

In being leaders of song, the music ministry assists the assembly in their full, conscious and active participation in the liturgy. For the music ministry, hospitality begins even before the Gathering Hymn. For example, are the hymn numbers posted in a visible location for the

assembly? Is the music taken from the approved hymnals for the Canadian church that are provided in the pews? Is music chosen to most enable congregational singing?

The Gathering Hymn enables all the individual voices of the assembly to join as one in giving God praise. The hymn chosen here is one that invites all to join in the singing, focusing attention on the sacred mysteries about to be celebrated by creating an atmosphere of unity. It is important to note that this is not “travelling music” to get the priest to the altar, but rather we sing all the verses of this hymn so as to unite us together in one voice in a celebratory manner.

The cantor offers hospitality by practically, and simply, inviting the assembly to respond to the psalm by a raising of his/her hand.

The Gospel Acclamation is a liturgical rite unto itself. The music ministry ensures that the assembly is joining the singing of the Gospel Acclamation. The leader of song, if there is one, ought to “lead” the assembly, and not turn his/her back to the congregation to face the choir or other music ministers.

In creating an hospitable environment, music ministers always remain conscious that they *serve* the assembly by leading them in song, not by *performing*.

## **Hospitality and the Word of God**

The Liturgy of the Word reminds us that God speaks to us profoundly in his Word and calls us to respond. In aiding us to more fully encounter the presence of God, our readers also have a hospitality role. If readers are not sufficiently well-prepared they can often stumble over difficult words or passages and may sometimes lose the “flow” or the sense of what they are proclaiming and our hearing is impaired. Proclaiming the word in a confident and clear manner invites the assembly to truly engage with the Word.

The presider and assembly reflect back that same hospitality by being attentive during the proclamation of the Word and by engaging fully in the Responsorial Psalm, as well as the Gospel Acclamation.

## **Hospitality and Holy Communion Ministers (ordinary and extraordinary)**

In celebrating communion we are invited to “come and eat”, being reminded of Christ’s gift of himself as life-giving food and drink. This greatest act of “hospitality” requires us to be most attentive to our actions and attitudes.

Communion ministers offer hospitality by using eye contact as they offer the Body and Blood of Christ to the communicant. Likewise the communicant responds in a hospitable manner by a profound “Amen.” With this “Amen” we show who we are and what we believe, thus *ministering* to all, especially those who may be struggling in their faith.

During the communion procession those receiving communion create an hospitable atmosphere by joining their voices to the communion hymn, helping all gathered to become the Body of Christ. This same atmosphere is profound when we remain standing with our brothers and sisters until the last person is fed.

## **Hospitality and Environment**

The physical comfort of the community plays an important role in hospitality. The church should be heated to a comfortable temperature in winter and kept cool in the summer. In addition, appropriate signage for washrooms, change rooms and family rooms should be clearly visible. It’s also important to make visiting families with small children aware that the family room is available.

Worship space ought be prepared with attention to each liturgical season. This will provide a welcoming environment which leads us into the mystery of the season being celebrated.

An hospitable attentiveness to the liturgical environment will help us ask questions about the effectiveness of our sound system, placement of choirs and music ministry, condition of vestments and sacred vessels, cleanliness of church and other spaces, accessibility of worship space and sanctuary, etc..

## **Hospitality and the Presider**

*No other single factor affects the Liturgy as much as the attitude, style, and bearing of the priest celebrant, who ‘prays in the name of the Church and of the assembled community.’ When he celebrates the Eucharist, . . . [the priest] must serve God and the people with dignity and*

*humility, and by his bearing and by the way he says the divine words he must convey to the faithful the living presence of Christ" (USCCB, Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship, November 14, 2007, no. 18)*

The presider leads the assembly in prayer and worship. In this ministry attentiveness to hospitality is essential. For example does he help to foster an atmosphere of welcome and reverence? Are his gestures, such as extending his arms during "The Lord be with you", expressive of this kind of welcome. Is he respectful of the times of silence called for in the liturgy? Is appropriate attentiveness demonstrated during the proclamation of the Word of God? Does he arrive at the church sufficiently early enough? Is the homily well-prepared and well-delivered in an attempt to engage the congregation's faith as relates to their daily lives?

Hospitality, at its most basic, is an attentiveness to often the smallest of details. It is the task of the presider to ensure that all are aware of their appropriate roles and are able to execute them to the best of their ability, in a fitting way to give God praise.

## LITURGICAL EVALUATIONS

### The Assembly:

Are the members of the assembly formed in their role in the liturgy?

Do they seem to understand their role?

Are materials and catechetical sessions available to assist them?

Do the members of the assembly arrive on time and remain until the end of Mass?

Do the people participate by their sung and spoken prayer?

If the words to the songs are projected on a screen, is there also an option for people to choose a song book with the musical notation?

Do they use the worship aids that are provided?

Do they understand the difference between the Sign of Peace and an ordinary greeting?

Do the presiders understand the importance of the members of the assembly?

Is this communicated by their words and actions?

Is it obvious that the presiders are leading the people's prayer?

Do they actively encourage participation?

Does their participation model what the assembly should be doing, for example, singing the gathering song?

Is their manner welcoming to those attending?

Do they pace the liturgy reverently, giving people time to absorb and reflect?

Is the atmosphere friendly and welcoming, or is there a feeling of isolation of individuals?

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*Spirit of Love*

*Ever-living and ever-loving God*

*Through all ages you call us to be faithful.*

*Send your Spirit of Love*

*to accompany us in our journey through life.*

*Help us to pass along the love and care*

*that has been shown to us.*

*Quicken our imagination to recognize you*

*in the ordinary events of life*

*and in the breaking of the bread.*

*We ask this through Jesus' name.*

AMEN

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***This edition of our Liturgy***

***Newsletter does not***

***pretend to offer a***

***complete review of***

***hospitality. Rather we***

***hope to provide you with***

***some ideas that will help***

***you reflect on the state of***

***hospitality in your parish.***

***We are hoping to provide***

***a workshop for the***

***Diocese on hospitality in***

***the near future. We ask***

***that you make copies of***

***this newsletter for your***

***parish.***