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Christ to One Another: Towards a Theology of Hospitality

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Towards a Theology of Hospitality

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In Memory
of my parents
Jay and Mary Beth Weiss

Dedicated to
my beloved brothers
Jorge
Mark
Scott

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In this thesis, I make the claim that we are called to be Christ to one another, and in doing so, God's divine hospitality becomes human hospitality. I know this to be true because of experiences in my own life when I have been on the receiving end of the most gracious and generous hospitality imaginable. I certainly would never have completed this project or my theological studies without the love, support and hospitality of many people who have accompanied me along the way.

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April 29, 2007
Feast of Catherine of Siena
Miami, Florida

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ABSTRACT

This thesis-project is a retrieval and re-imaging of the ministry of Christian hospitality. The theological themes of soteriology and eschatology, and the ethical-political dimension of human relationality are the underlying concepts that direct the development of a theology of hospitality that is relevant in post-modern culture.

The thesis commences with a "thick description" that includes the contours of the ministerial experience of the author, a definition of hospitality, and a set of guiding claims. The concept of ministry as a way of life in the context of Vatican II theology is developed. Three case studies of hospitality praxis at the local, national and international levels are presented with a critical analysis that includes responses from individuals involved in the case studies. Hospitality from the underside is also considered.

Hospitality in the context of the Christian tradition is explored by looking at the theme of hospitality in the Scriptures and considering Jesus in the dual roles of guest and host. An historical review of the practice of hospitality in the Christian tradition is presented. Hospitality in light of the sacramental and ritual life of the church is discussed with emphasis on conversion and Eucharist and the Works of Mercy.

The postmodern condition from the intellectual and cultural perspectives is explored in relation to hospitality through philosophical voices beyond an explicitly Christian context. A renewed praxis of hospitality with emphasis on a bias for the liberation of socially devalued people and a theology of accompaniment as a primary mode of hospitality praxis is then proposed. The thesis concludes with a case study of an outstanding example of contemporary hospitality praxis and a proposal for a workshop on hospitality geared to professional and non-professional ministers.

INTRODUCTION

IDENTIFICATION OF THE MINISTERIAL TOPIC

"Jesus gave his life so that persons could be welcomed into the Kingdom and in doing so linked hospitality, grace and sacrifice in the deepest and most personal way imaginable."[1]

The topic I will address in this thesis-project is a retrieval and re-imaging of the ministry of Christian hospitality. It is my claim that hospitality offers profound possibilities for social transformation in the contemporary Christian context and has the potential to build communion among the members of the Body of Christ and beyond in the diverse and fractured world we negotiate daily.

Hospitality has played a central and critical role is the unfolding of the Christian narrative. However, in general, there is a lack of understanding about the meaning and necessity of hospitality as an essential ministerial and moral practice in the Christian life. It is my hope that bringing the topic of Christian hospitality into dialogue with the tradition and with contemporary philosophical and cultural thinking will yield insights that will guide the development of a revisionist model of hospitality and renew interest in the ministry and practice of hospitality.

I am convinced that active engagement in hospitable practices makes Christian hope manifest. I believe that in the face of human suffering and life's vulnerability, hospitality is a sign of hope. Resisting the temptation to despair in the midst of suffering – our own or others – is one of the great challenges of the Christian life. In the broadest sense, there is the explicit understanding that suffering is always to be interpreted through the lens of Christian hope. Christian hope militates against despair and brings the

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[1] Christine D. Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 1999), 71.

eschatological horizon into focus. Concretely, though, where is hope to be found and how is hope to be known? Eschatological platitudes (however true they may be) have their limitations. One place hope is surely found is when we are Christ to one another through hospitable practices.

Hospitality as a practice of the Christian community has fallen on hard times. By and large, the practice of Christian hospitality has been assumed by institutions and delegated to professionals. The radical individualism that characterizes modern life does not promote self-sacrifice or a keen eye for the suffering of the other. "Turn away from suffering and take care of yourself" is more likely to resonate than "Turn away from sin and be faithful to the Gospel." Hospitality is not a way of life in the fast-paced modern world. Emphasis on privacy, protection of personal space, keeping of boundaries, and extremely hectic lifestyles where multi-tasking is an admired activity does not create an environment where hospitable practices can flourish. At times, people who are extremely hospitable are often viewed as heroic, or with suspicion, or even psychologically strange.

This thesis-project is a modest proposal located in experiences of every day life, and is in large measure about ordinary activities, albeit ones that require self-sacrifice and discipline. Christina Pohl describes what I refer to in this way. "While we might imagine sacrifice in terms of one moment of heroic martyrdom, faithful hospitality usually involves laying our lives down in little pieces, in small acts of sacrificial love and service. Part of the mystery is that while such concrete acts of love are costly, they nourish and heal both giver and recipient."[2] It is in the on-going and repeated actions of laying down our lives in little pieces and small acts of sacrificial love that the act of being Christ to one another occurs, and divine hospitality becomes human hospitality.

[2] Ibid., 34.

It is a systematic consideration of this wonderful gift – divine hospitality becoming human hospitality – that is the concern and focus of this thesis-project.

CONTRIBUTION TO THE CHURCH AND MINISTERIAL PRACTICE

There are several ecclesial audiences for this thesis-project. The first audience is the professionals: theologians, clergy and lay ecclesial ministers, and those in pastoral positions who keep the day-to-day operations of the Church moving and functional. The second audience is the non-professionals: the countless Christian men and women from all walks of life who serve the Church by making the ministry of hospitality a way of life.

It has been my experience that any time ministerial practice is brought to critical theological reflection, both the minister and the ministry change for the better. I believe this will be the case with my work on this topic. Careful analysis of the ways in which hospitality is currently provided will offer new insights about the social dynamics of hospitality and identify areas that require further consideration. Searching the tradition for historical and systematic information and examining post-modern philosophical and cultural perspectives will further expand my knowledge base and insights. In concert with my initial analysis of current praxis, the material in the historical and systematic inquiry will increase my ability to review my position and make connections that are useful to guide my thinking as a theologian and my praxis as a minister.

It will be useful to bring my ministerial practice to the theoretical level. Further critical exploration of this topic will provide me with fresh and expanded insights that will change my perspective, guide my decision making and actions, and improve my ability to consider and implement new strategies to improve my ministerial praxis. It will also allow me to articulate and share my work with those who are called to the same

When we elect leadership in religious life, we choose someone from amongst ourselves. We don't put an ad in the help wanted section of the newspaper in the hopes of finding a qualified "CEO." While we seek spiritual qualities first and foremost in a leader, we hope that the one we elect will also have sufficient practical skills to meet the many and varied challenges that will undoubtedly arise in the course of a four-year term. Nevertheless, it is hardly expected that the one elected will have all the practical skills, talents and other gifts that might be needed, even in normal times. As such, we often find ourselves drawing upon the generosity of friends of the Province who are willing to offer their advice and help in their respective areas of expertise.

Immediately prior to Hurricane Katrina and the flood, our Dominican sister, Ms. Jennie Block, O.P., had spent almost three years helping us fight off bankruptcy. To say "helping us" is a gross understatement. The Province was in a severe financial crisis and we did not have the expertise or knowledge needed to stop the downward spiral. Jennie (who holds an M.B.A. degree and at one time had her own management consulting business) stepped in, at my request, and generously gave us the better part of her waking hours for the next several years. Her gift of time, hands-on talent and resources was the primary factor in the Province's recovery to a relatively stable, albeit fragile, financial condition. Jennie was in the process of phasing herself out as "volunteer" when the floodwaters came.

My memory is a bit fuzzy; however, I don't believe I even had to ask. Jennie was there offering to help. In fact, for a couple of days my whereabouts was unknown. Moreover, Emiliano, my Vicar (the friar who is second in command), was "incommunicado", stranded as it were, on the Northshore of Lake Pontchartrain without electricity or telephone service. Jennie immediately contacted one of the other friars with leadership ability and encouraged him to jump into the role of "point person" for communications until everyone could be accounted for, which he did.

Once I re-surfaced and it was clear that all of the friars had survived and had landed safely somewhere in the province, my Provincial Council and I gathered in Dallas within the week. By then I had spoken with Jennie and asked if she would help us. She did not hesitate. She dropped what she was doing and flew to Dallas.

During those early days and weeks after being rescued I was functioning, although I was in somewhat of a fog. As I said, my memory is a bit fuzzy. However, I remember that at our Dallas meeting the Council and I began working on a number of matters pertaining directly to the care and well-being of the friars; e.g., putting a plan together to assign and relocate almost 30 active or semi-active friars who had been

ministry and to other interested parties. Finally, I hope this thesis-project will validate the work of the non-professional minister and will give increased recognition to the contribution that non-professional ministers make to the Church and the community.

DESCRIPTION OF METHOD

The method of practical theology that will guide this thesis-project is the one proposed by Don Browning.[3] Like all practical methods, Browning's method follows the praxis-theory-praxis model. Browning's method is a hermeneutical and dialogical project that attempts to understand and think practically about specific situations, and interpret the way in which religious experience and symbols interact with practical rationality in the shaping of praxis.[4]

Browning's method moves through four phases which he names as descriptive, historical, systematic and strategic. In the descriptive phase, a particular ministerial praxis is considered using what is known as a "thick" description that takes into account the wisdom of the community, the specificity of the context, and the person of the minister. In the historical phase, theological disciplines relevant to the ministerial considerations are brought into dialogue with the ministerial praxis. In the systematic phase, critical and philosophical theory is added to further extend the parameters of discussion. In the final phase, the material is integrated to develop a strategic practical theology that offers new insights and direction to the first praxis.

Browning's method is well suited to my research for several reasons. First, the initial questions posed by Browning regarding the first praxis provide an excellent way to

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[3] Don S. Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology: Descriptive and Strategic Proposals* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991).

[4] Ibid., 16-17.

systematically and critically reflect on the ministerial practice I am considering. These questions, each of which will be taken up in depth in my thesis, are "How do we understand this concrete situation in which we must act? What should be our praxis in this concrete situation? How do we critically defend the norms of our praxis in this concrete situation? What means, strategies, and rhetorics should we use in this concrete situation?"[5] Second, the emphasis on critical analysis in conversation with the historical, theoretical, philosophical and social sciences supports the type of work I believe is necessary to critically engage the question of how hospitality can be practiced in the contemporary context. Third, Browning's emphasis on the centrality of theological ethics in the practical method fits well with my understanding of hospitality as a moral practice. His insights into the five dimensions of moral thinking - visional, obligational, anthropological, environmental-social, and rule-role[6] - will aid critical reflection in all phases of inquiry.

THEOLOGICAL INQUIRY

The theological issue raised in this thesis-project is an articulation of the relationship between ecclesiology and eschatology. Specifically, what is the role of the Christian community (the *ecclesia*) in creating a setting where a realized eschatology is made known to the members through presence and hospitality? In order to fully respond to this overarching question, various aspects of the Christian life must be examined. These include such issues as 1) the way learning to be hospitable is a critical part of the

[5] Ibid., 55.

[6] Ibid., 71.

conversion process; 2) an understanding of hospitality as a required extension of the Eucharist; and 3) the implicit underpinnings of hospitality in the Works of Mercy.

Several theological perspectives ground my work. As hospitality is essentially a moral practice, relational ethics are central to my theological investigation. My understanding of relationality within the community is necessarily Christological and will include liturgical and sacramental theologies. This paper considers how the sacramental life of the Church engages hospitality by proposing the idea that practices of hospitality are integral to the on-going process of Christian conversion and discipleship. My final strategic conclusions and the revisionist model that I propose will make use of systematic theology in the areas of Christology, ecclesiology, and eschatology.

OVERVIEW OF THESIS ORGANIZATION

This thesis-project is organized into six chapters that follow Browning's methodology. Chapter One provides a "thick description" of the ministerial concern being addressed. The contours of my ministerial commitment are described in some detail followed by an in-depth discussion defining hospitality. The claims and intuitions that ground my work and that will serve as reference point for theological investigation are then developed. Chapter Two, describes my understanding of ministry as a way of life in the context of Vatican II theology. Three case studies from my experience – from the local, national and international levels – are presented with a response from an individual who was involved in the situations and critical analysis of the three ministerial case studies is presented. Chapter Two closes with a consideration of the topic of hospitality from the underside.

In Chapter Three the topic of hospitality in the context of the Christian tradition is explored. I begin by looking at the theme of hospitality in the Scriptures and move to an historical review of the practices of Christian hospitality. Chapter Four further considers the theme of hospitality in light of the sacramental and ritual life of the church with special emphasis on the conversion process and the Eucharist. The Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy as a form of hospitality is presented and Chapter Four closes with a summary and conclusion.

Chapter Five engages critical and philosophical voices from beyond the explicitly Christian context and looks at the postmodern condition from both the intellectual and cultural perspectives. The thought of the post-modern philosopher, Jacques Derrida on relationality and hospitality joins the conversation along with philosopher Albert Borgmann and theologian Nathan Mitchell drawing some conclusions on how these voices might engage and impact the ministry of hospitality. Chapter Five closes with suggestions for a renewed praxis of hospitality using the work of Roberto Goizueta and Robert Schreiter.

The concluding Chapter Six opens with a case study describing what I believe is among the best practice of hospitality in the contemporary world, the *Accompagnateur* Program at Partners in Health. I then offer a proposal for a workshop on the ministry of hospitality targeted for professional and non-professional ministers that will offer a model and guidelines for practicing hospitality in the post-modern situation.

SCOPE OF WORK

This thesis-project considers the topic of hospitality from a ministerial perspective using a practical method. These two factors direct the content and lines of inquiry that will be undertaken. Many other approaches can be used to make explicit the location of hospitality within the theological discourse, and limits will have to be set, even within the lines of inquiry that I am pursuing. The scope of this work does not permit a careful examination of many other excellent topics that would contribute to a broader and more complete understanding of hospitality. Three topics in particular come to mind. The first is hospitality in relation to the activities of the official church. The inhospitable treatment I often witness in my own tradition borders on scandalous, especially to people on the margins – people who are re-married, gays and lesbians, people with disabilities, and, in many cases, women. Second, it would be inspiring and informative to study both individuals and communities who set the standard for hospitality. This would include historical figures such as the saints, religious communities, like the Benedictines and individuals in the last century such as Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin, Catherine de Hueck Doughterty, Henri Nouwen and Jean Vanier, and communities such as Annunciation House, Madonna House and L'Arche. Lastly, it would be interesting to construct a pneumatology that names the Spirit as hospitality and develop a spirituality of hospitality. I wish that space permitted me to include these worthwhile topics, and I hope that others will bring these and other topics to theological reflection.

A WORD ABOUT THE TITLE

The title proposed for this thesis-project is "Christ to One Another: Towards a Theology of Hospitality." This title was selected to convey the underlying concepts of this work. To use the image of people being Christ to one another suggests that hospitable interaction is the way to model Jesus and hence, a way of life for all Christians. It is intended to communicate that in the practice of the ministry of hospitality, the Incarnation is concretely made known. It suggests that hospitality is an important ministry in the Church and can best be understood through Christological interpretation. Finally, the title is meant to convey that idea a theology of hospitality is needed to further interpret the ministry of hospitality in the fullness of its meaning.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

What might I hope to accomplish in this thesis-project? The overall project is the development of a revisionist model of hospitality. I believe for a model of this type to be useful, it must consider the practices of Christian hospitality in ways that engage both the secular and ecclesial contemporary context, for these two realities are completely intertwined. It is my intention to develop a model of hospitality that is relevant to the current social milieu that the Christian of today negotiates.

If questions animate our thinking, as Browning suggests, then answers will animate our actions. Bearing in mind Browning concern that suggests that "issues are fluid and we never fully know the results of our actions,"[7] I, nonetheless, will propose answers and related actions to the following questions.

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[7] Ibid., 17-18.

1. What is a sound theology of hospitality that can guide related praxis?

2. What are the hallmarks of authentic Christian hospitality?

3. How can professional and non-professional ministers reclaim the practice of hospitality as an essential component of the intentionally lived Christian life?

As Thomas Richstatter points out, "Hospitality is a doorway to the transcendent…and not an add-on for the Christian, it is the bottom line."[8] It is to comprehensive consideration of the bottom line for Christians – hospitality - that I now proceed.

[8] Thomas Richstatter, "The Ministry of Hospitality," *America* Vol 190, no. 15 (May 3, 2004), 12.

CHAPTER 1

CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIAN HOSPITALITY: A VIEW FROM MY MINISTERIAL PERSPECTIVE

According to Don Browning "the task of descriptive theology is to describe contemporary theory-laden practices to give rise to the practical questions that generate all theological reflection."[1] This reflection, which Browning names as "horizon analysis," necessitates a systematic and critical look at current praxis from the perspectives of the minister and the actions of the community. It is to this horizon analysis that I now turn our attention.

THE CONTOURS OF MY MINISTERIAL COMMITMENT

Practical theological method demands that one reveal the social location that informs and influences their theological perspective. Experience is to be respected, biases are to be exposed, and the position from which one theologizes is to be revealed. My social location reveals that I "do" theology from the context of a North American, Anglo, middle-aged woman. Factors such as an advanced education, financial privilege, early widowhood, and thirty years of labor in the parenting trenches shape my consciousness and behavior. My understanding of the Christian tradition springs from being a life-long Roman Catholic, a professed lay Dominican, and a graduate student in theology.

My interest in the role of hospitality is a result of several factors. First, I am often told that "hospitality is your ministry." Unlike most of my fellow students, I do not have nor do I seek a full-time, professional ministerial position. Instead, my life is one of radical availability that leads to involvement in a wide variety of seemingly random

[1] Browning, 47.

activities. By radical availability, I mean freely offering time, presence and resources on an *ad hoc* basis. My commitment is to offer personal and personalized support in whatever way is needed. This might be through cheerful welcome or organizing assistance for whatever large or small tasks are at hand – sometimes for those close to me, often for acquaintances, and sometimes for those I do not know personally. Generally a response to ordinary and problematic situations, the assistance offered might be a response to matters as serious as life and death or while less critical, quite important in other ways. I have come to believe that what I do is a ministry of hospitality that furthers the building of community within the Body of Christ and is an inclusive witness beyond the Church. The case studies in the following chapter should illustrate this point clearly.

Applying the principle that social location informs and influences theological perspective, my ministry of hospitality is located in the "land of plenty" – on the top rung of the first world where the scandal of too much, not too little, is often the case. Many of the people I encounter are weary and in need of welcome and rest with a different, but nonetheless, very real fatigue and deep hunger. Arthur Sutherland points out, "Increasing urbanization means we see more people but we encounter, in the deepest sense, fewer and fewer."[2] I can corroborate Sutherland's claim for I often encounter people who are in need of renewal and genuine interaction. While the need for physical supports such as food and shelter may not be what is needed, the opportunity for human exchange at a deep and meaningful level is a critical need because of today's frenetic lifestyle. My ministry of hospitality is often offered to people who experience the difficulties of

[2] Arthur Sutherland, *I Was a Stranger: A Christian Theology of Hospitality* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006), x.

negotiating the hyper-reality of endless bytes of information, the tantalizing enticement of a consumer driven society, and the stresses of constant action and movement. The people to whom I minister beg for connection, rest and renewal, deeply desiring genuine hospitality that is able to passes through the superficial levels prevalent in the contemporary world.

Family Background as Formation

> *Weiss took the concept of helping the less fortunate to the ultimate level during the early 1970s. A young boy and a friend, armed with a gun, tied up members of Weiss' family in their Coral Gables home and stole a quarter of a million dollars in jewelry and cash.*
>
> *The boy eventually returned to Weiss' house to confess and return much of the loot. Weiss decided not to press charges. But after the boy's parents kicked him out of their house, Weiss went a step further. He took the youth into his own home and helped him finish high school. Weiss later paid his way through college and law school. Ultimately, the boy became a successful lawyer.*
>
> *From the obituary of my father, Jay W. Weiss*
> *The Miami Herald*
> *Monday, February 2, 2004*

I come from a family with a long and unusual history of radical hospitality as evidenced from the above quote. I am the oldest of eight children, five of whom were adopted as older children, including a black girl who joined the family at twelve, and a four year old mentally retarded boy adopted from an institution where he had been severely abused. My mother was a New Orleans Catholic, my father a New York Jew. When they fell in love and married in 1948, there was little hospitality offered to their mixed marriage and the social conditions in both New Orleans and New York made starting over elsewhere a necessity. A kind uncle gave my father a job in a liquor store in Miami. Although my father's dream of medical school was dashed, he went on to build

a hugely successful company in the wine and spirits industry. Together, until my mother's untimely death at the age of 51, they forged an inspiring alliance that was founded on welcoming others, especially those who were on the margins of society. I offer a few examples from my growing up years. Three young children whose parents were in residential treatment for heroin addiction lived with us for a year. A stripper who was arrested for heaven only knows what was asleep on the sofa as we were scurried off to school one morning! Busloads of migrant children partied at our house on a regular basis often leaving the water in swimming pool a dingy gray – always going home with new clothes, food for their parents, and a full tummy. A young Japanese woman once called us. It seems she had met someone in a bus station in Houston who told her to call our family if she came to Miami and we would welcome her. Kinoko stayed for three months and left to go home to Japan wearing my sister's blue jeans. Countless runaways and misfits knocked on our door at all hours and were listened to, fed and clothed by my parents who worked to reconcile them with their families. These are but a few highlights as space does not permit the many more examples I could offer.

After my mother's long illness and sad death, my father's grief was poured into compassionate outreach and continued hospitality in much broader forms. Every indigent person in Miami-Dade County became his concern as he chaired the Public Health Trust demanding one standard of care for rich and poor alike. He redesigned the landscape of the University of Miami Medical School and Jackson Memorial Hospital and helped to build a world-class trauma center and a world-class cancer center. There was literally no good cause that he turned his back on, contributing time, wisdom and financial resources.

On the personal side, my father paid to send at least a hundred young people, including some of my friends, to college and assisted beyond with cars, and jobs and advice.

To my parents great credit, none of us ever resented or resisted their efforts to help others. They somehow managed to make us feel included and as if there was always enough love, time, attention and resources to go around. As we got older, it became a collaborative effort and my siblings and I would be included in the decision-making process and workload. The family mantra of "more has been given to you so more is expected" still rings in my ears.

Professional and Volunteer Experience

It is from this unusual and holy background that I learned the basics about inclusion and hospitality. It is not difficult to understand why many of the children in our family chose professional and volunteer paths that were based in non-profit and public sectors. My own career and volunteer path can be divided into three phases. After a short but life giving stint as a novice with the Religious of the Sacred Heart, my first career was spent in the education field as a teacher and an administrator in the private and public sector. In 1979, I began to work, first as a volunteer and then as a professional, in the disability field. I became interested in disability because of my younger brother Bobby who was mentally retarded. I worked for a service provider for six years, and a management consulting company that served disability organizations for ten years. I was involved in many aspects of the disability field including administration, policy and organizational development, national conference planning, grant writing, project development and management, legislative advocacy, and staff training and education. Viewing the oppression of people with disabilities first hand awakened my interest in

social justice, and being actively involved in the disability rights movement furthered my interest in the inclusion and welcome of marginalized people.[3] Along the way, I picked up a master's degree in business administration believing that knowing about finance, strategic planning, human resources and marketing would be helpful in the non-profit sector. These skills proved to be useful and have been put to good use in service and ministry situations for the last eighteen years.

In 1995, I made the difficult decision to close my management company and leave my work in the disability field and pursue a master's degree in theology fulfilling a long-held dream that went back to my early days as a novice with the RSCJ's. The decision to study theology was intuitive and spontaneous based more on possibilities than practicalities. Motivating it was a search for ecclesial identity and an outlet for service to the Church, and thereby, the people of God. After earning the MA in Theology in 1998, I began studies for the degree that I am now completing, finishing the course equivalency for an M. Div. before beginning the coursework for the D. Min. My studies were interspersed with calls to serve and in a variety of situations including a two year commitment as the founding director of the Center for Dominican Studies at Barry University, a three year intense volunteer commitment for the Province of the Southern Province assisting the Provincial in a major administrative reorganization, the care of my beloved father before his death to cancer, founding a Center for Social Medicine and Health Equity at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine in my father's memory, accompanying my three children through the college search which ultimately

[3] My published work in this area includes *Project Neighborhood: Community Living Alternatives for People with Developmental Disabilities* (Tallahassee, Florida: The Developmental Disability Council, 1989), and *Copious Hosting: A Theology of Access for People with Disabilities* ((New York and London: Continuum Publishing Company, 2002).

made me an "empty nester," selling the family home and - much to my delight - "downsizing," responding to the request for help in the post-Katrina period and so on! I hope two things are apparent: first, that I am qualified to pursue the topic of hospitality as a way of life, and secondly, that given the level of activity, it is probably makes sense for me to undertake a careful examination of what I am doing and how I might do it better.

MY WIDOWHOOD IN THE CONTEXT OF THE WIDOW TRADITION IN THE CHURCH

> *...she must be well attested for her good works, as one who has brought up children, shown hospitality, washed the saints' feet, helped the afflicted, and devoted herself to doing good in every way.*
>
> 1 Timothy 5: 9 – 10

I dare say that my life would have taken a very different path had I not been suddenly widowed at the age of 41. In all probability I would not be writing this thesis on hospitality or even pursing theological studies and ministry. After I was widowed, the social position of widows and social aspects of widowhood became an area of great interest for me. Early in my studies, I took a Wisdom Literature course where I was given the assignment of an exegesis of Proverbs 31:10-31, the famous passage in the last chapter, often called "The Good Wife." The following except from the paper sheds light on my initial experience of widowhood.

> I close with a few words about my own story. I was married for eighteen years and believe that I tried to be and live the good wife archetype. On most counts, I think I actually succeeded. I adored my husband and I think I did him "good, and not harm" (Prov 31:12). I ran a beautiful and organized home, a successful business and contributed to the community. Both my three children and my husband called me happy and praised me in the nicest ways. In many ways, I had a perfect little life. If I was "burdened with an over domestication" that kept me out of touch with my soul, I wasn't aware of it - although living up to such high standards of

> perfection probably did impact me in some negative ways. I didn't, however, learn what it meant to be that "women of valor" while I was married and being "the good wife." I learned about being a "woman of valor" when I was suddenly widowed at forty one years old - and left with three children to raise and no one to "sing my praises at the city gates." In a period of five violent minutes, I went from being "more precious than jewels" to the "widow in need of charity." Such is the inherent danger of buying into norms and archetypes. In reality, of course, my experience has been complex and nuanced. Coping with personal grief, heartbroken children, painful adjustments at every level and overwhelming new responsibilities did not allow me the time to reflect on my transition. It was several years before I realized that in a subtle way, my status had changed. In spite of that fact that I am not on what Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza calls "the bottom of the patriarchal pyramid,"[4] I found that I had drifted over to the margins where I keep company with the many fine women our society calls the widows, the single moms, the lesbians and the old maids. When I was married, I was only dimly aware of this margin. Realistically, I know that few, if any of us, chose to come here. Paradoxically, the place is crowded with "women of valor." Amusingly, very few of us seem to be searching for "the good husband." And mysteriously, I have discovered some secrets over here on the margin that I chose not share - suffice to say that sometimes the grace we didn't ask for brings with it many gifts.[5]

Indeed, my widowhood has been filled with many gifts. Although surely not the path I would have chosen, these last sixteen years have been filled with many blessings that include the joy of raising my three fine children to adulthood, the gift of my theological studies which have afforded me an opportunity to seek understanding for my faith, and given me a language to communicate about matters of great import. I have been blessed by the gracious hospitality of the Dominican friars of the Province of Martin de Porres who have given me a place in the Church through a vowed commitment and participation in the mission of the Order.

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[4] Elizabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza, "The Will to Choose or Reject: Continuing Our Critical Work," in *Feminist Interpretations of the Bible*, ed. Letty Russell (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1985), 127.

[5] Jennie Weiss Block, "The Good Wife and the Wild Woman: Towards a Peaceful Coexistence, an Exegesis of Proverbs 31:10-31," (Miami, Florida: Barry University, 1996), 7-8.

Two points related to my widowhood are central to the theological work I am undertaking in this thesis-project. Early on in my widowhood I had the following spiritual insight. *If this is what I was given, there must be grace in it. I must give myself over to it and to learn to be a good widow.* The way I did this was to turn to the widow tradition in Church history to interpret and define my own widowhood. Let me explain how this connection has shaped my ecclesial identity and ministerial commitment.

The Widow Tradition

Widows were a significant force in the development of Christianity in the first three centuries. Bonnie Bowman Thurston indicates that "Their service is so important to the Church that we hear almost as much about it as that of the bishops."[6] The designation of "widow" was an imprecise term[7] that is defined beyond the simple loss of a husband[8] and reached deep into the life of the burgeoning community. There are numerous widow references through the New Testament that shed light on the role of the widow and portray widows in a variety of ways – some of them quite empowering.[9] Early church documents from the second and third centuries contain extensive references to the order of widows from writers including Ignatius of Antioch, Polycarp, Sherherd of Hermas, Pliny, Tertullian of Carthage, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen, with the *Didascalia*

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[6]Bonnie Bowman Thurston, *The Widows: A Women's Ministry in the Early Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989), 44.

[7] According to Bonnie Bowman Thurston, this term was later used to also refer to virgins and deaconesses – the defining characteristic being unmarried.

[8] Jo Ann McNamara, *A New Song: Celibate Women in the First Three Christian Centuries* (New York: Harrington Park Press, 1985), 33.

[9] The scope of this work does not allow a full treatment of the New Testament widow texts which include 1 Cor 7:8, 39 -40, Rom 7:3, Mark 12:38-44, Luke 2:36-38, 4: 25-26, 7:11-17, 18:1-8, 21:1-4, -Acts 6:1-7, 9:36-43, 13:1-321:1-4, and 7:11-15.

Apostolorum being the most instructive text available on the role of widows in the third century.[10]

At the risk of oversimplifying a fairly complex phenomenon, the following is a brief overview of the widow tradition in the early Church.[11] The role of the widow in the ancient world was complex. "Christianity inherited many of its attitudes toward widows from the Hebrew Bible and the Septuagint. The widow stands with the stranger, the orphan, and the poor as special objects of God's concern"[12] and the early Church was concerned with the care of these vulnerable women. However, an interesting situation developed within the community of widows: "the church not only supported needy widows but by the second century it elevated them to the status of a clerical order."[13]

In the early church there were three groups of widows (1 Tim 6 – 13). There were the enrolled "real" widows, the unenrolled widows, and the younger widows. The unenrolled widows (who lived for pleasure and did not need Church support), and the younger widows (who were idle, sensual, and gadding about gossiping!) do not appear to have much standing or respect. The first group, the enrolled widows, was a special group with assigned duties and functions in the community.[14] They appear in the roster of Church officials along with deacons and elders and in time developed into an active and influential order of widows. It is clear from the pastoral letters that an office for older

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[10] See Bonnie Bowman Thurston's book *The Widows: A Women's Ministry in the Early Church* (Minneapolis: The Fortress Press, 1989) for a detailed look at the content of these texts.

[11] For an excellent treatment of the sociological implications of this topic, see Jouette M. Bassler, "The Widow's Tale: A Fresh Look at 1 Tim 5:3-16", *Journal of Biblical Literat*ure, 103/1 (1984).

[12] Thurston, 20.

[13] Ibid., 7.

[14] Ibid., 41.

women not only existed in the Church but was large enough to require detailed regulation.[15] There was a complex set of qualifications for these widows as laid out in 1 Tim 5:3-16. She must be at least sixty years of age, have had only one husband, live alone and vowed to celibacy, be dependent on God, be continually prayerful on behalf of the community, and known for her good deeds. The age was later lower to forty years of age.

Women who fit these categories had a special relationship with the Church. Their names were recorded in a catalog and they had a variety of ministries in the home and in the community. While the care of the "poor widow" as an object of God's concern was certainly a part of early church life, it is far from the whole story. Jouette Bassler explains how the status of widows changed. "Christianity began as an egalitarian movement and precisely this stance of equality fostered its acceptance among fringe groups of society – among slaves and especially among women, who numbered prominently among the first converts."[16] Bassler asserts that there was "sociological advantage derived by the widows from membership in their circle."[17] They had a degree of freedom not found in society at large in the ancient world and were remarkably unencumbered by ordinary restraints. Freedom from domestic responsibilities and care of family gave the widows time for private devotion and public life. The widows made charitable and pastoral house calls and may have been involved in the teaching function. While the church financially supported many of these widows, it is likely that the wealthy

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[15]Ibid., 55.

[16]Jouette Bassler, "The Widow's Tale: A Fresh Look at 1 Tim 5:3-16," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 103, no. 1 (1984), 39.

[17]Ibid.24.

widows took charge of house churches.[18] The order of widows was engaged in the provision of "good works." Thurston describes the ministry and spiritual attributes of the widows in this way: "The spiritual quality embodied in the phrase is nurturance. Hospitality embodied generosity and openness; foot washing embodies humility. A person moved to relieve the stress of those in trouble embodies compassion."[19]

What happened to the order of widows? Simply put, as the church became institutionalized in the post-Constantine era, office trumped charism. Patriarchy trumped egalitarianism. The public sphere trumped the home as locus of activity. Widows became suspect because of their charismatic form of leadership, and the institution of widowhood was severely limited when a shift in church policy moved the primary qualification for ministry from charism to office.[20] When Jo Ann McNarmara writes that her study "represents but a first chapter in the long history of the struggle of Christian women to find spiritual fulfillment in the church of their faith,"[21] there are lots of us widows and virgins who know just what she means.

There is always the temptation for anachronistic romanticism in Christian theological undertakings. The idea that the early Christians did things the "right" way often captures our imagination. While it has its limits, learning from historical evidence and harvesting the tradition are useful and necessary. And of course, the history of the widow tradition didn't end – it just changed into new manifestations. It was the order of

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[18] For example, Mary, the mother of John Mark (Acts 12:12), and Lydia (Acts 16: 11 -15).

[19] Thurston, 49. Arthur Sutherland and others are quick to point out that these attributes and roles should not be considered essentially feminine.

[20] Ibid., 116-117.

[21] McNamara, 5.

widows, not of deaconesses, which was the forerunner of the monastic orders for women.[22] In time, the convent became the place many widows with a religious interest turned. Stories of wealthy widows working closely with the clergy to build the church dot Christian history until this day. In the introduction to her book, Bonnie Bowman Thurston explains the basis for her interest in the topic of widows in the church.

> In 1983 a number of magazines ran feature articles on the world's fastest growing poverty group: women. In the United States the poorest group of all was elderly women who had been homemakers and who, as widows, had no pensions or health coverage. The statistics I read were particularly striking because I observed in churches I served and visited that it was often this very group of older women who were carrying the primary burden of service to and support of their congregations.[23]

I wish I could report more favorable statistics on the lot of widows in the United States and beyond. In her opening address at the Widows Rights International Conference in 2003, Mrs. Graça Machel stated, "Many widows are hounded from their homes and denied access to essential resources such as shelter and land to grow food. They are also subject to degrading and life-threatening traditional practices. They have no status and often they are figures of shame and ridicule."[24] While the women's rights movement in the United States has made strides in improving the status of women in general, widows, especially ones that dedicate themselves to homemaking, are likely to find themselves with financial problems, limited employment opportunities, and socially ostracized. This brings me to my second point: my personal experience of marginality as a widow. This is a critical point as the process of hospitality can only be realized when

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[22] Thurston, 114.

[23] Ibid., 7.

[24] Widows Rights International – News Update. http://www.widowsrights.org/newsupdate.htm. Accessed on-line on January 13, 2007.

the host "understands the normative significance of being marginal."[25] Christina Pohl claims that it is in acknowledging our own marginality that we are able to offer a hospitality that mirrors God's graciousness and offers comfort to those who suffer. "Deep sensitivity to the suffering of those in need comes from our ability to put ourselves in their position, and from remembering our own experiences of vulnerability and dependence. This sense of shared human experience extends to even those most foreign to us."[26] James Keenan goes on the explain Pohl's point further, "Christina Pohl takes a critical look at hospitality and analyses the power inequities that occur in any guest/host relationship. She captures what so many who write about hospitality miss: that the host must understand the perspective of the alien and that this was precisely the richness of hospitality in both Bibles."[27]

I acknowledge that my life of privilege lacks many of the tell-tale signs of marginality. However, even with financial security, education, and a very supportive social network, I have seen and felt the marginality attached to widowhood. All widows find themselves in the position of having to "reconstruct their self-concept, lifestyle and identity."[28] This process of change in self-concept and identify is inconsistent, slow going and often met with resistance from friends and family as the woman gains new skills and self-confidence. Interestingly, this does not seem to apply equally to men as

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[25] James Keenan, "Jesuit Hospitality?," in *Promise Renewed : Jesuit Higher Education for a New Millennium*, ed. Martin R. Tripole (Chicago: Loyola Press, 1999), 234.

[26] Pohl, 65.

[27] Keenan, 234.

[28] "Widowhood in America, The Demographic Picture" in *Encyclopedia of Death and Dying*. Accessed at http://www.deathreference.com. January 13, 2007, 6.

male identity is still very much defined by work and the public sphere, while women still have the basic responsibility for home and children.[29]

Widows report that they "find the designation of 'widow' self-demeaning when associates do not consider them worthy of continued interaction."[30] Many widows report problems with their married friends who view them as a "fifth wheel" or a threat to their husbands. Anecdotally, someone once told me that "widows were the piranhas of society" – but not to worry, I was "different." I didn't dare ask how. I have come to view the term "single mother" as a pejorative indicating second-class status as a family, usually spoken of with pity or distain. I have been patronized: "We are so proud of you for renting a car all by yourself." Even when it is applied as a compliment, "You have done such a great job with the children, especially on your own," I am embarrassed and marginalized.

This section was intended to explain the way my widowed status has allowed me to practice my hospitality ministry in a particular way, and to gain empathy and insight into the marginalized status of those in need of hospitality. I "do" hospitality, if you will, as a widow – with its multivalent meanings and in the historic tradition of my faith. I am certain this has wide applicability to the many widows who claim the church as their social location and who practice the ministry of hospitality as a way of life.

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[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid., 7.

THE CONTOURS OF CHRISTIAN HOSPITALITY

Before turning to the development of a working definition of hospitality, it is helpful to briefly describe the landscape of hospitality. There are several qualities that are inherent in and implicit to the process of hospitality that need to be identified.

Hospitality, as it is located in the Christian narrative, has the potential to be the story of "a human exchange that restores the spirit."[31] Hospitality happens in "face-to-face, gracious relationships of encouragement and respect."[32] Hospitality provides what I like to call "real presence," that is, the offer and acceptance of time and attention freely given to the lonely other with no expectation of return or outcome. Hospitality is as much a mindset and an attitude as it a response to physical needs or pragmatic assistance.

Hospitality can be offered at the personal and institutional levels. At the personal level, hospitality might involve one-on-one interaction, and the use of one's home and personal resources. At the institutional level, hospitality might involve working for an organization that provides hospitality or supporting through time and resources an institution that is in need of hospitable outreach. Examples of both of these kinds of hospitality are presented in the case studies in Chapter Two. Both types are valid and appropriate to different circumstances and are needed in the comprehensive provision of hospitality. At some point, it is likely that ministers of hospitality will engage in the provision of hospitality on both levels. They are not mutually exclusive, although they might require different skill sets.

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[31] John Koenig, *New Testament Hospitality: Partnership with Strangers as Promise and Mission*, Overtures to Biblical Theology (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 1.

[32] Pohl, 70.

Christian hospitality is always a partnership, a two way street where "those who offer hospitality are not so much providing a service as they are sharing their lives with the people who come to them"[33] John Koenig in his examination of hospitality in the New Testament says hospitality is "the catalyst for creating and sustaining partnerships in the Gospel."[34] In turn, hospitality becomes a way to put Gospel directives into practice. In authentic hospitality, the guest and host are equal partners and in the giving and receiving share the same status. "Hospitality does not entail helping another so much as immersing oneself in a new reality, entering into a new relationship with one who before was unknown or unappreciated."[35]

Hospitality always involves taking action. If hospitality remains an idea or a concept, it remains an abstraction and never actually becomes hospitality. Amy Oden makes the point that "The humble and gracious spirit that accompanies hospitality is only made known as it is incarnated and embodied."[36] Hospitality focuses on responses to situations in ordinary living, usually involves the setting aside of one's own priorities and needs so as to be present to another, and often comes at a price. Hospitality, though, is more than an action. It is certainly more than a state of mind that we generate now and

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[33] Ibid., 72.

[34] Koenig, 10.

[35] Amy Oden, ed., *And You Welcomed Me: A Sourcebook on Hospitality in Early Christianity* (Nashville: Tennessee: Abington Press, 2001), 109.

[36] Ibid., 108.

then for convenience. It is a particular way of looking at the world.[37] In this worldview, "looking around we see only Jesus,"[38] and we are transformed by seeing Christ in others.

A Working Definition of Hospitality in this Thesis-Project

A definition suggested by Arthur Sutherland in his book *I Was a Stranger: A Christian Theology of Hospitality* is an excellent starting point in defining hospitality as it is intended to be understood in this thesis.

> In light of Jesus' death, resurrection and return, Christian hospitality is the intentional, responsible and caring act of welcoming or visiting, in either public or private places, those who are strangers, enemies, or distressed, without regard for reciprocation.[39]

Sutherland definition correctly moves beyond a traditional definition that confines or limits hospitality to the location of the home, or welcome provided only to strangers. He names the main points as:

> **Context and Motivation** – the death, resurrection, and return of Jesus
> **Personal Attributes** – intentional, and responsible
> **Actions** – act of caring, welcoming or visiting
> **Location** – public or private places
> **Participants** – strangers, enemies or those who are distressed
> **Expected return** – without regard for reciprocation

Context and Motivation

The motivation and overarching context for hospitality is the extraordinary breadth and depth of the Christian narrative. To Sutherland's definition I would add the birth and life of Jesus along with the death, resurrection and ascension. These multi-

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[37] Michele Hershberger, *A Christian View of Hospitality: Expecting Surprises*, The Giving Project Series (Scottdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1999), 31.

[38] Paraphrased from the Transfiguration accounts; Matt 17:1-6, Mark 9:1-8, Luke 9:28-36, NSRV.

[39] Sutherland, xiii.

valent events, in all their dimensions of beauty and suffering, and complexity and simplicity are the grounding and starting and ending point for all Christians. Interpreting hospitality through these salvific events provides different approaches to understanding exactly how divine hospitality converts into human hospitality and becomes a blueprint to follow the practice of hospitality. While the context of the type of hospitality being addressed in this thesis is the Christian narrative, it is a reality that the world in which the Christian community exists is pluralistic and secular. Christianity, no longer the dominant culture, is impacted and influenced by events in the wider society. For contemporary theological reflection and praxis to have meaning it must intersect with the secular culture and pluralistic world with an awareness of how prevailing philosophical trajectories influence theological investigation. Most events of Christian hospitality will be a mixture of religious and secular. While the motivation for the hospitality is the Gospel, the context is likely to be outside of the *ecclesia*.[40]

Personal Attributes

Intentionality, a guiding moral principle, along with responsibility and caring, are named as the personal attributes of the providers of hospitality. To live with intentionality and a willingness to assume responsibility are signs of affective and spiritual maturity. Both communicate the ability to act with awareness of what one is doing and one's personal motivations for one's actions. Beyond moral attributes, there are personal attributes that are found where hospitality occurs including compassion, humility, nurturance, and graciousness. These attributes convert into the "actions of caring and welcome" which will vary widely depending on the needs of the guest. Often

[40] The exception would be along the lines of a program that is run by a church community.

hospitality will include basic physical supports such as food and housing, clothing, and transportation. Others may need assistance with problems such as medical attention or crisis management or support in a time of suffering. Psychological supports such as the opportunity to speak and be listened to, or a safe place to rest and be renewed, are actions of caring and welcome. Spiritual needs may also be addressed through prayer, presence, and acceptance.

Actions and Location

Sutherland's "welcoming" or "visiting" in "public" or "private places" is very helpful as it stretches the traditional understanding of the location of hospitality as the home. This reconfiguring is essential in the contemporary world. In many ways, the traditional concept of "home" has lost its meaning as a central, gathering place, and the nuclear family – father, mother, two children - with a stable place from which to welcome others is often no longer an organized reality. The privatization of the home and the priority given to personal space militates against the home being the primary locus of hospitality. Modern hospitality needs often to be an outreach in this mobile world – welcoming "homes" need to be created in non-traditional settings. The location of hospitality is, as John Koenig puts it, "...a place that is not our home but nevertheless enables us to feel at home. On occasion this space, which can be psychic as well as physical, appears where we least expect it, offering us a refuge from real or imagined dangers."[41] Sutherland emphasizes "space" over physical location. He claims that "the offer and acceptance of

[41] Koenig, 1.

hospitality can take place anywhere there is space to share and the authority to share it."[42] James Keenan writes of "hospitality on the road" exhorting his Jesuit brothers "to go out and beyond to those who not find the world a welcoming place."[43]

Participants

Sutherland names three categories of those to whom hospitality is to be offered; the stranger, the enemy and the distressed. To this list, I would add the guest and those who are oppressed. A discussion on each of these categories follows.

Throughout Judeo-Christian history there has often been much emphasis on the welcome of "the stranger." The Book of Hebrews goes so far as to say, "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers for by doing that some have entertained angels unaware."[44] The fifteen hundred year old Benedictine Rule admonishes that "All guests who present themselves are to be welcomed as Christ." And is not the Christian always "the stranger in the strange land?"

The concept of the 'stranger" is understood very differently today than it has been in the past. The post-modern understanding of "the other" in the continental philosophical movement has in some ways rendered everyone a stranger, and may actually be a more helpful way to approach understanding the concept of the stranger. And the thought that "the other" might be an angel would cause either fear or a snicker in many circles. Identifying exactly who is the "the stranger" is in the modern world in not always clear.

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[42] Sutherland, 41.

[43] Keenan, 241.

[44] Hebrews 13:2. All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise stated, are from the Bernhard W. Anderson, Bruce Manning Metzger, and Roland Edmund Murphy, *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

Indeed, in the today's Western culture where casual informality, instant affectivity and faux intimacy has replaced social practices that encourage the slow development of relationships and reticence about revealing personal details too quickly, it is sometimes hard to even figure out who is who in our midst. Christina Pohl writes of this problem in our culture.

> Sometimes we describe our nation as a society of relative strangers – millions of people minimally attached to home and community, highly mobile, independently pursing our own projects, contentedly leaving one another alone to pursuer our tasks....We often feel like stranger ourselves, somewhat rootless and disconnected, unsure of how to offer a welcome or to whom it should be given.[45]

And frankly, sometimes, it is far easier to be gracious to the unknown stranger than to those we are in relationship with – especially those we are have a commitment to be in relationship with through work, selective friendship, religious life, and even within marriage and family.

Sutherland's addition of the enemy is a challenge along these same lines. Both the unknown and known enemies deserve our hospitality. The political world-wide situation renders many strangers enemies – millions of people whose very presence threatens us. Sometimes those we perceive as our enemies are not faceless unknowns but those whom we find difficult, those who hurt and betray us, or who do not see things the way we do.

Sutherland's inclusion of "the distressed" is critical. We are surrounded by people in distress. The suffering of the world bears down on us – in our own lives and in those we know and those we do not know. Never has the world needed hospitable outreach more. Not a day goes by that one does not receive personal or corporate news of a devastating

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[45] Pohl, 89.

nature. Illness, death, tragedy, betrayal, loss, disappointment, financial troubles, relational difficulties, anxiety and depression mark our lives and the lives of those we know. Abject poverty, starvation of millions of people, oppression, wars, suicide bombings, terrorist attacks, and panoply of natural and human disasters mark the lives of millions of people with whom we share this increasingly smaller planet. No thoughtful religious person can avoid the most difficult questions raised by suffering or the frustration with the failure of even the most creative arguments advanced by theodicy and theologies of suffering. There is no easy or correct answer to how we can explain God's role in the constant barrage of pain and suffering we negotiate daily. There are extensive sources on the topic of suffering that attempt to interpret suffering and give meaning to the experience.[46] Numerous philosophical and theological theories attempting to explain God's relationship to why humanity's suffering have been posited through Judeo-Christian history.[47] Interestingly, what is missing in the literature and the theories is how to concretely respond to suffering. I am in agreement with Sutherland that a primary response to human distress is hospitality – that is, when we are Christ to one another through hospitable practices. How is this claim verified? My answer is a simple one. Listen carefully to the narrative of a personal situation of vulnerability or suffering. Their stories, almost without exception, will tell of compassionate hospitality in many forms – presence, personal acts of kindness often requiring sacrifice, meals prepared and shared, errands run, the rearrangement of busy schedule to make time to help, and the

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[46]See for example Daniel Harrington, *Why Do We Suffer?* (Franklin, Wisconsin, Sheed and Ward, 2000); Jurgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God* (New York: Herder, 1974); Dorothee Soelle, *Suffering* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975).

[47]Some of the models and theories that have been suggested to explain suffering include: sacrifice, divine retribution, mystery, redemptive suffering, apocalypticism, and the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus.

sharing of financial and emotional resources – even beyond practical limits. Sometimes, even much of the time, when the situation at hand has no solution, this compassionate hospitality offers comfort when none is to be found elsewhere.

It is essential to consider the role of the guest in the two-way street of hospitality. Because Gospel hospitality always upsets social stratification, to the category of participants, I would add the guest. The guest is always the bearer of great gifts. Thomas Ogletree explains it this way, "The equality of the host and stranger finally shows itself in reciprocal acts of hospitality that reflect reversals in the relational order. My readiness to welcome the other into my world must be balanced by my readiness to enter the world of the other."[48] Those who are oppressed and find themselves on the margins of society for social and economic reasons deserve a central place in this discussion. Thomas Olgetree states, "The oppressed are daily subjected to an alien world quite again their wills. They are already forced to live in a society which denies them their full humanity."[49] Because it operates on the human level, hospitality has a unique potential to restore dignity.

Expected Return

Sutherland's last descriptor is perhaps the most challenging of all – without regard for reciprocation. As shocking as it may be to the modern sensibility, hospitality must always be offered without any expectation of return. Hospitality demands we extend ourselves as fully, generously and openly as we can, without expecting or looking for anything in return. We can, however, hope for the outcome of social transformation for

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[48] Thomas W. Ogletree, *Hospitality to the Stranger: Dimensions of Moral Understanding* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 4.

[49] Ibid., 5.

both the host and the guest. "The success of hospitality, however, does not depend on end results. Rather, the success of hospitality is measured by the degree to which one offers one's genuine presence with another, to fully enter another's world and dwell with another."[50]

James Keenan claims that the entire Catholic theological tradition is expressed in terms of mercy which he defines as "the willingness to enter into the chaos of another."[51] This is good description of modern hospitality for most ventures into hospitable practices mean entering into the chaos that reigns in the post-modern world. Keenan goes on to say that, "attending to someone in need is no simple affair. It means entering into the entire problem or chaos of that person's particular situation."[52] Anyone who believes that entering into the chaos of another person's life is simple or easy, particularly during times of suffering, has obviously not attempted to do so it in a serious manner. Authentic hospitality will be infused with tender mercy reflecting God's incredible love for humanity.

In Summary

There are six key components in hospitality praxis:

1) Context and motivation
   Within the Christian narrative in the midst of the secular world
2) Personal attributes
   Intentional, responsible, compassionate, humble, generous, gracious
3) Actions
   Attention to physical, psychological and spiritual needs

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[50] Ibid., 109.

[51] James F. Keenan, *The Works of Mercy: The Heart of Catholicism* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Pub., 2005), 3.

[52] Ibid.

4) Location
Anywhere there is space and recognition
5) Participants
Host and guest, strangers, friends, enemies, and those who are oppressed
6) Expected return and outcome
No expected return, outcome of social transformation

A working definition of hospitality in this thesis-project is as follows:

Christian Hospitality....
...calls and directs all Christians, through the events of the birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension to be Christ to one another
...calls all Christians to extend hospitality to friend, foe and stranger alike
...must be offered in an intentional and responsible way
...is always freely offered without expectation of reciprocity
...is mobile and can happen anywhere
...is always grounded in praxis and involving the actions of giving and receiving
...infuses tender mercy in the midst of the chaos of another's life
...is a part of ordinary life and values presence over outcomes
...finds its expression in caring, compassion, graciousness, nurture, and humility

GUIDING ASSUMPTIONS

As stated in the Introduction, it is my claim that hospitality offers profound possibilities for social transformation in the contemporary Christian context and has the potential to build communion among the members of the Body of Christ and beyond in the diverse and fractured world we negotiate daily. I further claim that a retrieval and re-imaging of the ministry of Christian hospitality and active engagement in hospitable practices makes Christian hope manifest. To this claim and the working definition as stated, I now present three fundamental assumptions that guide my thinking and the development of my work.

1. Hospitality is deeply tied to Christian identity and is a central theme woven through all aspects of the tradition.

James Keenan calls hospitality "a virtue that defines us spiritually, morally, and ecclesially."[53] This statement situates hospitality as a key indicator of Christian identity. To paraphrase a song we used to sing in the 60's "they should know we are Christians by our hospitality."

Hospitality themes run through the tradition in every area that is open to theological investigation and reflection. These include Scriptural exegesis, Christology, pneumatology, eschatology, ecclesiology, moral theology and spirituality. The areas of greatest significance in Christian life, the Eucharist and the corporal works of mercy, are tied inextricably to hospitality. Practices of Christian hospitality always originate in and are an extension of the Eucharist. The corporal works of mercy are a direct invitation to hospitality and the criteria on which we will be judged. Hospitality is, in the words of Arthur Sutherland, "the practice by which the Church stands or falls."[54] To this I would add, it is the practice by which we, as Christians, stand or fall as well.

2. Hospitality is a moral practice that is essential to the intentionally lived Christian life.

Hospitality is demanded of us by the Gospel. "It is at the very center of what it means to be Christian and to think theologically."[55] Like most Gospel mandates, the practice of hospitality tends to be inconvenient and require some vigilance and

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[53] Keenan, "Jesuit Hospitality?," 234.

[54] Sutherland, 83.

[55] Ibid., xiv.

change on our part. James Keenan asserts that hospitality "provides a normative description of moral conduct that embodies distinctively Christian features."[56] This is an extraordinary claim, for it places hospitality practices in a central and key place in both the personal and corporate realms. Learning to put oneself aside to offer hospitality is a critical part of the process of conversion. It is through this that we learn not to live for ourselves but for others.

3. **Hospitality has the potential to be socially transformative for both the giver and the receiver, and directs Christians towards the building of a community with a realized eschatology.**

Since the earliest days of Christianity, hospitality "has always had a subversive, countercultural dimension."[57] When we consciously offer hospitality new possibilities for conversion and communion are present. Amy Oden points out that "In the experience of hospitality both the host and the guest encounter something new, approaching the edge of the unfamiliar and crossing it. Hospitality shifts the frame of reference from self to other relationship."[58] We can actually learn to put our own interests, our own cares, even our subjectivity aside to be Christ to one another. "This is what Paul Ricoeur calls a de-centering of perspective. This emphasis is a corrective to the Western tendency to beginning and ending ethical analysis with a self – either logical or actual – who read the experiences of others in terms of his or her own experiences, and who assimilates the moral import of the other into his or her own self-actualization."[59] The process of offering hospitality in the Christian context

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[56] Keenan, "Jesuit Hospitality?," 234.

[57] Pohl, 61.

[58] Oden, ed., 15.

[59] Ogletree, 2.

moves us in the other direction to where prevailing social boundaries can be transcended, community can be built and divine hospitality becomes human hospitality.

Luke Bretherton convincingly argues that hospitality is far more effective than tolerance in negotiating moral diversity among Christians and non-Christians. To this I would add that this suggestion is often needed even among Christians with widely different moral perspectives.

> Tolerance – whether understood in pragmatic pr procedural terms or as a substantive good – is inadequate when addressing the question of how Christians should relate to those with whom they disagree and who have a different conception of the good. The emphasis on tolerance since the early modern period overshadowed the notion and practice of hospitality within Christianity, eclipsing how hospitality shaped the way in which Christians relate to those with whom they disagree. Second, not only does hospitality have more antecedents in Christian social practice than tolerance, but also, as a practice, it is founded on more explicitly biblical and theological imperatives.[60]

People, be they those to whom we minister, our family, friends, co-workers and neighbors, strangers or enemies, flourish in an atmosphere of genuine hospitality. As God's hospitality enters human relationships, the Kingdom of God is proclaimed and at hand.

SUMMARY

In this Chapter, I began the process of "horizon analysis" which is necessary to engage in a practical theology method. I have covered the background and motivation for my own commitment to a ministry of hospitality as a way of life explaining how my family and professional background and my status as a widow support my hospitality

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[60] Luke Bretherton, *Hospitality as Holiness: Christian Witness Amid Moral Diversity* (Hampshire, England: Ashgate, 2006).

ministry. I offered some general background information on hospitality and presented a detailed working definition of hospitality as it is used in the thesis-project. This definition includes the six components that are present in hospitality praxis along with a detailed description of the characteristics of hospitality. The assumptions that guide my work in this thesis-project are also included. In the next chapter, my perspectives as a minister are brought into dialogue with the actions of the community through the presentation of three case studies and examination of the ministry of hospitality from the underside.

CHAPTER 2

HOSPITALITY MINISTRY AS WAY OF LIFE

LAY MINISTRIES IN THE THEOLOGY OF VATICAN II

In this section, three case studies are presented to illustrate and describe the ministry of hospitality in which I am engaged. Grounding these experiences and my actions is an understanding of "ministry as a way of life" that grows out of an ecclesiology explicit in the teachings of the Second Vatican Council. I am called to ministry as a way of life by "the universal call to holiness" as explicated in Chapter Five of *Lumen Gentium.*[1]

> It is therefore quite clear that all Christians in whatever state or walk of life are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of charity, and this holiness is conducive to a more human way of living even in society here on earth. The forms and tasks of life are many but there is one holiness. All, however, according to their own gifts and duties must steadfastly advance along the way of a living faith, which arouses hope and works through love....widows and widowers and single people can also greatly contribute to the holiness and activity of the church.[2]

It is unlikely that the Council members could have imagined or predicted what has occurred from the promulgation of this much debated document. The laity, if you will, took the ball and ran with it. The results are a large, burgeoning class of "lay

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[1] Other magisterial documents promulgated in the years following the Council have relevance as well such as *Christifideles Laici, Evangelii Nuntiandi*, and *Novo Millennio Ineunte.*

[2] "*Lumen Gentium,* Dogmatic Constitution on the Church," in *The Basic Sixteen Documents of Vatican Council II*, ed. Austin Flannery (Northport, New York and Dublin, Ireland: Costello Publishing and Dominican Publications, 1996), n. 41.

ecclesial ministers,"[3] many who make a professional career of church work, and many like myself, who commit themselves to ministry as a way of life.

The issue of layhood[4] in the contemporary American church is a topic laden with varying interpretations, opinions, understandings, and even controversy. A laywoman seeking to minister in the Church today runs the risk of finding herself in a somewhat schizophrenic state. By this hyperbolic statement, I intend to convey the reality that Roman Catholic laity and women in particular, live with a certain ambiguity about who they are and where they belong within the structures of the Church. The point could certainly be made that in the case of the laity, theory lags behind current praxis. In other words, lay men and women are assuming significant and influential roles in Church life; however, Church documents, descriptive language, definitions and titles, theological reflection, and acknowledgement and recognition do not fully capture, address or reflect the reality of current praxis. There is no doubt that we are in a time of great pastoral transformation much of which is the result of lay people assuming the roles and responsibilities that belonged almost exclusively to the clergy and religious in the past. It could also be said that there are many in Church leadership who do not view this reality as ideal, and accept the pastoral transformations taking place with reluctance, wishing for a return to "the good old days" with the clergy and religious at the helm, and the laity remaining the quiet faithful. But try as they may, it is impossible to turn back the clock for there was a significant shift in thinking at the Council that resulted in an ecclesiology

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[3] Even what to call these men and women is a debated topic representing the ambiguities of the current state. Since the Second Vatican Council there have been multiple titles suggested including Lay Apostolate, lay ecclesial minister, non-ordained minister, and the one in current use, ecclesial lay minister.

[4] This word was selected with intentionality to serve as a contrast to "priesthood" to make the point that there is a lack of appropriate vocabulary to describe the great majority of the membership of the Church.

that affirms the fundamental equality of all the faithful as the people of God. Aurelie Hagstrom explains, "The Council Fathers moved away from the clergy centered perspective in what the laity were simply seen as their clients. The laity, along with the clergy and religious, are the Church; they are the people of God."[5] Essentially, in terms of the foundations of Christian life, the sacramental identity of all the Christian faithful is the same. "Through baptism and confirmation, the laity (indeed, all the Christian faithful) are incorporated into the Body of Christ, the Church, and are deputed to act in his name."[6] However, as Richard Gaillardetz notes, "While the Second Vatican Council made important advances in our understanding of the Church, it was not able to articulate a complete, internally coherent ecclesiology,"[7] and there are certain sections of *Lumen Gentium* that attempt to protect and incorporate pre-Vatican II theologies regarding the hierarchical nature of the Church and the secular character of the laity. All lay people attempting to forge an ecclesial identity and minister in the Church live with this tension.

Nonetheless, *Lumen Gentium* invites us in and orders us to get to work. "Therefore all the faithful are invited and obliged to try to achieve holiness and the perfection of their own state of life."[8] Every member of the Church, therefore, is charged with the significant responsibility of keeping the memory of the Paschal Mystery and building up the Body of Christ thereby bringing the Good News of salvation to the world. The way in which these responsibilities are assumed, divided and carried out varies

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[5] Aurelie A. Hagstrom, *The Concepts of the Vocation and the Mission of the Laity* (San Francisco: Catholic Scholars Press, 1994), 38.

[6] Ibid., 5.

[7] Richard Gaillardetz, "The Ecclesiological Foundations of Ministry within an Ordered Communion," in *Ordering the Baptismal Priesthood: Theologies of Lay and Ordained Ministry*, ed. Susan K. Wood and Michael Downey (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2003), 26.

[8] "*Lumen Gentium,* Dogmatic Constitution on the Church," n. 41.

depending on a number of factors. First, of course, are the gifts and charisms given to each of us which are to be put to use for the building of the community. Next, the way in which these gifts are received and incorporated varies depending on the operative ecclesiology.

Ministerial identity is shaped by what we understand the Church to be and an ability to articulate and integrate this understanding in a concrete way. Given the diversity of our times, there are many deeply committed active members of the Church who understand what the Church is very differently, resulting in contrasting, if not competing, ecclesiologies. For example, it is safe to say that Mother Angelica and I have different ecclesiologies. In other words, we understand what the Church is, the way it operates, and our own roles very differently. Still, we have a great deal in common. We profess the same Creed, share the same lay status, and walk in the same line to the Eucharist. *Novo Millennio Ineunte* reminds us that "the ways of holiness are many, according to the vocation of each individual"[9] and that "holiness is not only a state but a task and all pastoral initiatives must be set in relation to holiness."[10] Michael Downey argues that "It was, and is my conviction that the most important 'skill' of the minister is to know, to cultivate a whole way of being, a habit of knowing and loving the tradition so that it can be effectively passed on and others might live fruitfully within it."[11] Ministers who engage in authentic hospitality meet Downey's criteria well - a whole 'way of being' and 'habit of knowing' is essential to the discipline of hospitable practices. Nesting in the

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[9] *Novo Millennio Ineunte* (31 December 2000), n. 31.

[10] Ibid., n. 30.

[11] Michael Downey, "Ministerial Identity: Questions of Common Foundations," in *Ordering the Baptismal Priesthood*, ed. Susan Wood (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2003), 4.

Christian narrative, hospitality allows others to live fruitfully within the tradition, and I can think of no better way to effectively pass the tradition on than by being Christ to one another. The following case studies will explain this more fully.

THREE CASE STUDIES OF HOSPITALITY MINISTERIAL PRAXIS

In this section, I present three case studies that will serve as representative examples of ministerial situations where hospitality is practiced. While these case studies refer to situations in which I personally participated, they in no way imply that there is anything special or unique about me or my ministerial outreach. Indeed, I can think of numerous people who offer similar hospitality on a regular basis with graciousness and compassion that far exceeds my attempts.

These three particular experiences were selected because they represent very different circumstances and locations. The first case study takes places locally, occurs in my home, and deals with a single individual in need of hospitality. The second case study takes place on a national scale, involves travel on my part, and deals with an institution in need of hospitable outreach. The third case study takes place on the international level, involves high profile people in a highly political situation, and deals with an individual that I did not know personally. In all three case studies, I am just a small part of a much larger context that involves the support and assistance of many other people in order offer hospitality and create a hospitable setting. One of the hallmarks of hospitality is that it comes looking for you. This is certainly true in each of the case studies presented here for review.

Each of the case studies follows the same format and is a critical reflection which attempts to examine the experience in light of the definition and assumptions forth in the previous Chapter.

The format is as follows:

a) Description of presenting problem or situation
b) Description of the social and/or political context in which this situation took place
c) Description of obstacles encountered and solutions that occurred
d) Initial Summary

A reflection from an individual who had first hand experience of my participation in the ministerial praxis of hospitality follows my reflection. Specific instructions on writing these reflections were provided to the respondents. (Instructions to respondents are provided in Appendix One). A section considering hospitality from the "underside" follows. The chapter closes with critical analysis of the ministerial case studies.

CASE STUDY #1
ON THE LOCAL LEVEL

"7555 Los Pinos Boulevard, Barry University and Mike Townsend"

Description of Presenting Problem or Situation

The presenting situation was a simple one. A young man, Mike Townsend needed a place to live in order to continue his studies at Barry University where I am a doctoral student and was, at the time, teaching as an adjunct professor. It is telling that I can't quite remember the details of how I became aware of this problem – I think perhaps one of the friars at the university introduced me to Mike during the previous school year. In his mid-twenties, Mike was an attractive and quiet young man – well mannered and

well spoken. A sense of reserve and perhaps sadness could be detected right under the surface on occasion, although he was quick to smile and laugh. Mike was interested in theology and clearly on a search for meaning. He was a great athlete and hoped to pursue a career in professional baseball and one of the main reasons he had transferred to Barry was because of its baseball program. At the time Mike found himself without housing, he was set to begin his junior year. The big obstacle he faced, and one that caused him great angst, was the fact that if he was unable to return to Barry for the fall semester, he would lose not only his baseball scholarship but would permanently lose his opportunity to play ball because of the way the number of allowable playing semesters are calculated by college athletic regulations.

Description of social and/or political context

While the presenting situation was a simple one, Mike's life was not a simple situation. Growing up somewhere up north, his family life was not particularly stable or supportive. His mother had died tragically when he was a little boy – a terrible event he witnessed. While Mike was on good terms with his father, there was not much offered in the way of support and resources and there was a history of lack of follow through and broken promises. The events leading up to Mike's housing problems took place over the summer when he went home. His brother had promised him a job and his father some other type of assistance and neither materialized making his plans to return to Barry impossible. Fr. John Markey, OP brought the situation to my attention and I spoke with Mike on the phone a couple of times. He was very upset about not being about to return to Barry to finish his studies and play baseball. He was sad but resigned – clearly this

was not the first time that his plans had fallen through but he didn't really see any options for him to be able to meet his academic goals and dreams of playing baseball. My invitation to him was a spontaneous one. I just couldn't let his opportunity to finish college evaporate so I told him he could come and live with our family for the school year.

Description of obstacles encountered and solutions that occurred

In many ways, this was such a non-event that describing it seems somewhat boring. I can't even remember the year this took place – my daughter helped me figure it out based on what grade she was in at the time. The obstacles from my perspective were minimal – probably much greater from Mike's perspective. I had plenty of room in my house and was able to give Mike his own room and bath. I had two children living at home at that time. My son Chris, near Mike in age, had recently graduated from Duke and was working on a Master's degree in architecture. My daughter Genevieve was in junior high school. I discussed this idea with both of them – not so much to ask for their permission but to involve them in the decision making process – the same way my parents had engaged me many years ago.

I treated Mike just like he was one of my children. He had no transportation or money and a job was not possible because of the academic and sports schedule. I let him use my second car and gave him a weekly allowance for spending money. We set up a baseball net in the back yard so he could practice his batting and he would spend hours in the yard hitting the ball. Sometimes, he would help Genevieve practice her soccer kicking. We got his favorite foods and he easily integrated into our family life. A few

stories stand out. My son got a new TV for the sitting area outside of the bedrooms downstairs where both boys lived. Mike was helping him set it up – Chris placed the TV on the edge of an ottoman and it went crashing to the floor – broken beyond repair. When we were discussing the incident, Mike quietly said, "I didn't think it was a good place to put but, I mean, Chris went to Duke so I thought he know what he was doing!" We had a great laugh over that one.

A highlight of Mike's year with us was his Mission trip to Haiti. This trip was organized through Campus Ministry over Spring Break. There were a lot of details that needed to occur to make this trip happen. It was a good reminder to me of how much support even adult children sometimes need. Mike needed a passport (left it to the last minute so we had to pay an expediting fee), several shots and vaccines (had to go to a special travel doctor), a plane ticket, and a stipend to cover the other costs of the trip. The costs far exceeded $1,000 but it was worth every cent as this was a turning point in Mike's spiritual development and personal maturity. As far as problems or obstacles, only one instance comes to mind when there was a little overspending on the credit card I had given Mike to buy gas. I think I discussed it with him and it was resolved easily – not unlike similar conversations I had with my own children along the same lines.

Mike stayed with us for about a year and then became a Resident Advisor at Barry the following year and finished his undergraduate studies majoring in theology. Mike, now married to a lovely young woman, teaches religion at a local Catholic school where he coaches the baseball team.

Preliminary Summary

Using the components and assumptions laid out in Chapter One as a guide, the following can be said about this experience of hospitality. The participants included me and my family, along with the support community at Barry, and a young man we barely knew – a distressed stranger, really. In retrospect, we really took everything on face value. We essentially knew nothing about Mike other than the scant personal information he shared and our impressions of him. The context was a blend of religious and secular – Barry is a Catholic University, my contact with Mike was facilitated by a priest, and Mike's interest in theology was a link we shared. The location was my home and the experience certainly involved entering the chaos of another life. Did I have an expectation of return? Well, I certainly hoped that Mike would do well in school, and I thought it was a good example for the children, but really we were just happy to help out. For us, it seemed very much a part of our family tradition.

RESPONSE:
MIKE TOWNSEND

"My Experience with Jennie Weiss Block"

> My initial encounter with Jennie Block came at a crossroads in my life. I was considering a risky decision of dropping out of the college I was currently attending to pursue a Bachelor's degree in Theology at Barry University. There were numerous factors that made the possibility of it happening all but hopeless until Jennie stepped in to offer her support with nothing to benefit from it. What she did for me can only be described as Christ like. Her gracious acts attended to my spiritual needs by removing all fear and hopelessness, and to my physical needs by providing me with every possible physical need I could imagine. She treated me, a stranger, like her own and gave me the opportunity to study theology and experience the compassion of God.
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> The decision to study theology for me was not an easy one given the circumstances. I was already attending a college with the financial assistance of an athletic scholarship from playing baseball. This was an important factor in my decision making process of dropping out of that

school, due to the fact that money was hard to come by. My father made an honest income, but was not in a position to help his children financially in a substantial way to attend college. I did not know how I would be able to afford to study at Barry University. That was if I was even accepted, which brought me to the next obstacle. The timing of the matter was that I was going to have to drop out of the college I was attending not knowing if I would even get accepted into Barry University. I was also forfeiting an athletic scholarship to go to a school that I was not guaranteed a spot on the baseball team, let alone a scholarship. It was going to take a real leap of faith to go through with this decision. One that I was not sure I could handle.

I was in a position of feeling hopeless. In my mind, it was not something that could conceivably be done. Up until this point in my life, I could not fathom God's compassion and mercy. My upbringing was less than ideal. I did not have many reasons to have a lot of hope. Growing up, my mother and father would fight often. The fights mostly stemmed from the financial situation they found themselves in. At one point my father was unemployed with a wife and five children. Verbal abuse in the house escalated to physical abuse. I witnessed my father on numerous occasions hitting not only my mother, but also my brothers and sisters. It was a frightening way to live. This way of life drove my mother to depression and drinking which ultimately led to her death when she was hit by a car when I was ten years old. It was at this time that I felt abandoned by God and a feeling of hopelessness crept into my life.

Life went on, and my love for the game of baseball kept me going throughout my high school days. I eventually went on to the Army which shaped me up, but I was still lacking Christ in my life. It was not until a year removed from the military that I felt a calling from God to believe. I was searching and trying to find the way over the next couple of years as I studied business in college, but I knew this field of study was not for me. Studying theology at Barry became an exciting option for me, but I did not know how it was going to become a reality.

I met Jennie Block through a priest that was a mutual friend. After coming in contact with each other a couple of times, Jennie became familiar with my situation. The time I spent with her was brief, and before long I was back home preparing to take classes at the local community college. Within a weeks time I was getting a call from her with the opportunity of a lifetime. She offered for me to stay in her home in Miami where she arranged for me to sit in two theology classes at Barry University to get myself acquainted with the school and the major. In order to get to school and back she let me drive her new Jeep with a gas card to pay for the gas. I had access to the entire house and to whatever was in the refrigerator. If there was anything special I needed, I could ask

for it and it would be given to me within reason. When I first arrived, I was given money to buy new clothes. I was also given an allotted amount of money weekly to take care of basic needs, as well as a set amount of money to leave with to take care of my needs for the summer. Needless to say, this bountiful gift from God through Jennie was more than I could ever imagine and brought a new meaning of hope into my life.

From my experience with Jennie, I was exposed to a whole new way of life. I was exposed to the graces of God that I never knew existed. Through her assistance, I also experienced one of the single greatest experiences of my life when I went on a mission trip to Haiti. I learned a great deal from that trip and there is no doubt I would not have be able to go with out her help. When everything went so wrong for so many years of my life, Jennie came into my life and brought so much good that could have only come from one place but God. When I met Jennie, I was in a situation in my life that I needed physical and spiritual help. She was the instrument of God that provided that for me. I eventually went on to graduate with a Bachelor's in Theology and am now able to share what I learned with the sixth graders I teach every day. It was all made possible through the help of Jennie Weiss Block. Thanks be to God.

CASE STUDY #2
ON THE NATIONAL LEVEL

"New Orleans, Hurricane Katrina and the Southern Province"

Description of Presenting Problem or Situation

The friars of the Southern Province have been a major presence in the New Orleans area for over a hundred years. Their ministries include two large parishes; St. Dominic church and school in the tony Lakeview area, and St. Anthony church and school on Canal Boulevard in a middle-class neighborhood. They run the campus ministries program at Tulane University and Xavier University, and minister in schools and hospitals. The Provincial Office, headquarters for the administrative, finance and development activities of the Province is located in Metairie, a nearby suburb. Our Lady of Wisdom, the long term nursing care facility for elderly brothers who are no longer able

to live in community is in New Orleans as well. In total, between thirty and thirty-five brothers lived in greater New Orleans area.

It is pretty much impossible to exaggerate the catastrophic effects of Hurricane Katrina. "Biblical proportions" was how it was described to me on the morning when I finally heard from Fr. Marty Gleeson, OP, Prior Provincial of the Province of St. Martin de Porres. Fr. Marty had been rescued by boat off of the second floor roof of St. Dominic's Priory on Harrison Street in the Lakeview section of New Orleans two days after the storm. Marty, along with many other brothers, had been out of touch for several days in the aftermath of one deadliest hurricanes in the history of the United States.

Description of social and/or political context in which this situation took place

I enjoy a wonderful, meaningful and somewhat complicated relationship with the Southern Dominican Province. My relationship with the friars began in 1995 when I began to go to one of the friars for spiritual direction and started my theological studies at Barry University. Over time, my relationship with the friars progressed to personal and institutional levels. On the personal level, serious life-giving friendships have developed. In May of 2002, I committed myself, by vow and forever, to the Order of Preachers through the Southern Province. In retrospect, and as it is with all major and permanent commitments, I did not fully understand what I was doing or what the implications would be. While not a model that is currently popular, the Dominicans have a long, exemplary history of providing lay women a place of belonging in the Church.[12] Institutionally, at

[12] During the Dominican penitent movement in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, many single and widowed women lived disciplined lives of devotion in their own homes while attaching in a variety of creative ways to priories. For an interesting treatment of this topic see *Dominican Penitent Women*, edited,

the local level, I am involved in the life of the community in a variety of ways including planning and implementing priory activities, and joining in prayer and community life. At the provincial level, I participate in a variety of ways including joining in official events and gatherings and offer of my time and financial support. For two and half years, I made an almost full-time volunteer commitment as a management consultant to the Province assuming responsibility for reorganization of the Province administrative functions including finance, development and strategic planning functions. I had an office in New Orleans and traveled there and throughout the Province. Typical of reorganizations, it was a difficult time in the life of the Province, and my job and role in Province affairs was not without controversy as many hard decisions had to be made along with some changes in the "corporate culture." I had almost transitioned out of my consultant job for the Province and it was time for me to move on and I was ready – pleased that I had made a contribution. In early August I made the comment, "Nothing is going to stop me from writing my thesis-project this year`` and I was set to begin in September. And then, Hurricane Katrina swept ashore.

The post-Katrina situation in the New Orleans area could best be described as total chaos – there was no person, family, business, or institution that was not adversely affected, including, of course, the Southern Province. Due to its sheer size, Katrina devastated the Gulf Coast as far as 100 miles from the storm`s center and wreaked havoc in the Bahamas, South Florida, Cuba, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida Panhandle. The costliest Atlantic hurricane in history, damages are estimated at $84 billion dollars. New Orleans was particularly compromised by the long feared breeches

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translated and introduced by Maiij Lehmijoki-Gardner with contributions by Daniel E. Bornstein and E. Ann Matter. (New York and Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 2005.)

in its vulnerable levee system. Breeches occurred in approximately twenty places, flooding much of east New Orleans, St. Bernard Parish, and other areas leaving approximately 80% of the city flooded. The death count stands at about 2,000 with another eight hundred people missing. Suffice to say, my Province and my brothers were in a terrible situation. Both priories were destroyed leaving thirty brothers homeless and in need of relocation. Our churches were flooded, and destroyed. All the elderly friars at Our Lady of Wisdom had been evacuated and the building suffered severe damages making it impossible for them to return for almost a year. We had no way of getting to or getting in the Provincial Office building to assess the damage or access any of our business materials. Holy Ghost Parish, our church in Hammond about an hour away, sustained severe damages as well. The list of post-disaster misfortunes goes on. Images of the nightmarish Superdome filled out television screens, and the reality of how devastated New Orleans was began to dawn on us. I had three years of solid experience in disaster related work,[13] and my brothers needed me. How could I do nothing in the face of a disaster of such enormous proportions? So with some trepidation, I volunteered to help.

Description of obstacles encountered and solutions that occurred

Time is of the essence in disaster relief work. The problems were many and complicated. In the first days after the storm, many brothers were still missing and communications had basically come to a standstill. There was no power anywhere in the area, and our main server was destroyed. Many people left with just the clothes on their

[13] I ran a disaster relief and preparedness program for people with disabilities for the State of Florida for three years after Hurricane Andrew.

back. Most of our cars were destroyed. The Provincial and Socius were missing for two days and when we finally heard from them, they were in a state of shock. All of our employees were homeless and spread all over the country staying with relatives. With over 50% of our income coming from charitable donations, a significant part of our donor base was gone. We had no access to our offices, our banking, and our information systems. The level of post-traumatic stress was high.

Joining forces with a member of the Provincial Council, Wayne Cavalier, OP, we formed a Disaster Relief Team and scrambled to put together a meeting to develop a plan of action. Six days after the storm, we gathered at St. Albert the Great Priory in Irving, Texas. By then we located all our employees and had wired money to them as most lived paycheck to paycheck. We had found most of the brothers although a handful were still missing – they were staying all over the place and were in need of housing, clothes and supplies, money and other support. Our faithful office assistant and business manager (who later had a post-traumatic stress nervous breakdown) joined us along with our Provincial attorney who had lost her home. Several brothers came to help and we put together a comprehensive action plan identifying areas that needed to be addressed. The plan included relocation for displaced brothers, repairs of building and priories, finance, fundraising, risk management and insurance, offering ministry to those affected by the storm, resumption of business operations, psychological assistance, and internal and external communication. The Provincial Council gathered for an emergency meeting several days later and we presented the Action Plan which was accepted. I was appointed as Coordinator, and we got to work.

Our workload was more than full-time. I never stopped for the next three months traveling to New Orleans multiple times – and even physical labor was involved a few times! Space does not permit a detailed account of all that we accomplished but I think it is fair to say that our quick and organized response paid off. We raised $1.4 million dollars through a campaign we ran out of Miami, displaced brothers were re-located, employees were cared for and supported, and we slowly resumed business operations. A year and a half later, the rebuilding of our priories and churches is not yet complete, although we never abandoned our ministries in New Orleans.

Preliminary Summary

This is the story of an institution and a city in severe distress and in need hospitable outreach. The participants include the city of New Orleans and the Southern Province. I have a special attachment to the city as it is my mother's birthplace and I spent a great deal of time there as a child. I have a serious commitment to the Province, although it took discipline to respond generously as it involved putting off my own plans, and entering back into a political situation that was difficult for me at the personal level. There were multiple locations involved – our hospitable outreach was definitely mobile. Again, it was a combination of the religious and the secular culture. We interfaced and were involved with the diocese, city, state and national officials. We, in turn, provided hospitality to others beginning with our employees and others who need support.

What about an expectation of return? A story about New Orleans was on the front page of *The New York Times* just yesterday. "The empty streets, deserted avenues and abandoned houses prompt a gnawing questions, nearly 17 months after Hurricane

Katrina: is this what New Orleans has come to – a city half it's old size?"[14] Seventeen months later, the Dominican presence remains strong in beleaguered New Orleans where the friars minister to God's people every day. I am happy to think that our disaster relief efforts on behalf of the Province helped to make this happen.

RESPONSE:
REV. MARTIN J. GLEESON, OP, PRIOR PROVINCIAL

"Grateful – At the Receiving End of Christian Hospitality"

On August 29, 2005 I was one of eleven Dominican friars who remained in our two priories in New Orleans as Hurricane Katrina approached the gulf coast. The nine friars who remained at St. Anthony Priory found themselves in a position to help and rescue quite a few people in the neighborhood when that section of the city began to flood on the day following the hurricane. I was riding out the storm with one other friar at our Lakeview residence, St. Dominic Priory, when the 17th Street Canal was breeched in the midst of the hurricane, quickly filling the priory with 10 feet of water. Instead of finding ourselves in a position to help and to rescue our neighbors, we found ourselves needing to be helped and rescued. In retrospect the decision to remain in the city may not have been a prudent one. The chaos that characterized the ensuing days was made worse by the fact that a number of friars who experienced the flooding were traumatized to some degree or another. I count myself in that number.

As the elected leader (the Provincial) of the friars in the eleven-state Southern Dominican Province of St. Martin de Porres, I knew that it would be my responsibility to launch a disaster relief and recovery effort. Several factors would complicate this monumental challenge. First, as I said, I had been somewhat traumatized. Secondly, our provincial (central) office had been damaged and would be inaccessible for months to come. Finally, our office staff had evacuated with their families and were scattered across several states. A successful relief and recovery initiative would require fast action, clear and methodical thinking, a great deal of planning and coordination of efforts, an abundance of enthusiasm and energy, and lots of prayer. The praying I could do. I wasn't so sure about the rest of it.

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[14] *The New York Times*, January 21, 2006, p. 1.

displaced, to other houses and priories in the province, as well as a plan to temporarily relocate our elderly and infirm friars to a healthcare facility in Houston.

Jennie agreed to take charge of the practical relief and recovery efforts. One of her strengths is her ability to quickly size up a problematic situation, determine what needs to be done and then break it down into manageable pieces. Another of her strengths is her ability to direct and motivate people in the successful accomplishment of seemingly unwieldy projects. She offered all of these talents to us, and we took her up on it. Before leaving Dallas, she had a preliminary plan in place, delineating the challenge into three phases: immediate relief efforts (with a strong emphasis on meeting the needs of our displaced employees; reestablishing our communications network; and raising money); near-term recovery efforts (loss recovery; re-establishment of office operations; avoidance of another financial crisis); and long-term planning for the future (because it could happen again).

Before our meeting was over, she had put in motion what turned out to be a very successful international fundraising effort which, among other things, saved us from a second brush with potential bankruptcy. In the weeks and many months following our Dallas meeting, the plan was executed step-by-step. Friars and staff were assigned to handle various tasks and responsibilities. Jennie and I worked "shoulder to shoulder" as she coordinated the many aspects of the various efforts underway. Frequent conference call meetings enabled her to keep everyone "on task," and regular trips to New Orleans allowed her to be a hands-on working coordinator rather than simply a consultant.

As I reflect on this historic catastrophic event and on my Dominican sister's generous self-giving response to this most challenging moment in the history of the Southern Dominican Province of St. Martin de Porres, I am filled with gratitude. This was the second major crisis that we had faced in less than four years, and in both cases Jennie put many of her own needs aside in her extremely busy life, and placed her time, talent and resources at the service of the province. She made herself radically available to me and the friars. Wherever she needed to be, she was there, paying for her own travel expenses and sacrificing time that she probably should have spent getting some rest. Whenever I would thank Jennie, she would simply say "I just thank God that I am in a position to help. I love the province. I love the brothers." She never looked for a "thank you," after all, she is a Dominican and this is her province. So we got in the habit of thanking each other for what the other was doing for the recovery of the province.

I had never thought about Jennie's self-giving response in our times of great need in terms of "hospitality." Yet, as I reflect anew, I understand the application. Ever since I met Jennie, her hospitality in the more traditional sense was regularly manifested. If the priory was full and a visiting friar needed a place to stay, Jennie opened her door. If we were celebrating a special event, she would often provide food and drink. It has never been uncommon to be invited to Jennie's house for a meal. As I dwell on Jennie's revisionist definition of "hospitality" it is quite clear that her generous self-giving response to us in our time of crisis was not a different species of Christian response than the more traditional kind of hospitality; but simply a more radical and demanding practice of it.

Understood in this way, as a "moral practice that is demanded of us by the Gospel," it helps me understand very clearly why Jennie's response to a thank you is "I just thank God I am in a position to help." It helps me understand how she is able to keep helping undeterred even when, now and then, she may sense that her help is being taken for granted or not fully appreciated by some. "I love the province. I love the brothers" she says. Even more so, it is evident that she loves the One who gave her life, who desires to spend eternity with her, who calls her to this radical giving of herself to others simply because they are in need.

CASE STUDY #3
ON THE INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

"Paul Farmer, Fr. Jean-Juste and the Blood Run"

Description of Presenting Problem or Situation

Paul Farmer[15] called me from his mother's house on Christmas Day to ask me for the exact wording and citation from Matthew's Gospel when Jesus is asked "Lord, when was it we saw you sick and in prison?" He needed the citation for an article he was writing was entitled "Christmas in a Haitian Jail" that was subsequently published in the Miami Herald on January 2, 2006 telling the world of the situation of a seriously ill political prisoner in Haiti, Fr. Gerard Jean-Juste. I first heard of the plight of Fr. Gerry, as he is affectionately called, in mid- December. Paul was worried about him as he had

[15] Paul Farmer, MD, Ph.D. is the Presley professor of medicine at Harvard University and co-founder of Partners In Health, an international organization that provides health care to the poorest people in the world. Dr. Farmer's incredible work is chronicled in the best-seller *Mountains Beyond Mountains*.

heard his health was deteriorating and he told me he was planning to try to go to the jail and examine him on his upcoming trip to Haiti. The week before Christmas, Paul and his wife, Didi, who is Haitian, left their seven year old daughter, Catherine with me for four days for a short trip to Haiti. Didi was going to visit her family, and Paul was working at *Zammi Lasante*, the hospital complex his organization Partners in Health built and runs in Cange in rural Haiti. I began to be copied on a series of rapid-fire e-mails and getting calls explaining what the exact plans were for the visit to prison to see Fr. Gerry. It became clear to me from the information in these e-mails that even attempting to visit the prison, much less examine and draw blood from Fr. Jerry, was a dangerous mission. Paul was getting significant resistance for this plan from friends and colleagues. On the morning of December 22, he called around 6 a.m. to ask for my support. How do you say no to someone who takes the Gospel so seriously? My only question to him was, "Who is the point person in the event this plan runs into trouble?" Without missing a beat, Paul answered, "Why, you, of course." It took me a few minutes to realize he wasn't joking. As Paul's beautiful and lively little girl danced around my house, I reviewed all the information in the e-mails and noted the names, e-mail addresses and telephone numbers of everyone involved[16] so I could keep them updated, and be ready to mobilize and respond in the event things did not go as planned.

The plan was for Paul to visit and examine Fr. Gerry in jail the next day. Paul was to leave Cange at 4 a.m. for the five hour drive to Port-au-Prince arriving at the jail by 9 a.m. He had spent hours on the previous day on the phone with the jail trying to arrange his visit. He was not even sure if they would let him visit much less examine Fr.

[16] There were literally dozens of people including a US Senator, many of Paul's colleagues at Partners in Health, and political advocates around the country on the list.

Gerry, for Paul himself is viewed as a highly political figure in Haiti. His wife Didi was being driven in another car and would meet Paul at the airport where they would take the 2 pm flight to Miami. What could go wrong? Just thinking about all the things that could go wrong kept me up most of the night – mostly in prayer – for the success of this dramatic mission and for Paul's safety. He called on his way to the jail and promised he would call on his way to the airport.

Description of social and/or political context in which this situation took place

Paul explained the political context in which Fr. Gerry's situation took place in his Herald article.

> Haiti's best known prisoner is a Catholic priest, Father Gerard Jean-Juste. Born and raised in Haiti, he was the first Haitian ordained a priest in the United States. Inspired by liberation theology, Fr. Gerry has worked with the homeless, uprooted and poor. He directed Miami's Haitian Refugee Center from 1979 to 1989, which championed the rights of Haitian immigrants, most of them newly arrived "boat people" fleeing persecution and misery in Haiti.
>
> But Fr. Gerry traded the comforts of Florida for the slums of his native country. Charismatic and warm, he turned his attention to feeding the hungry, clothing the naked and putting children in school. This work became more difficult following the February 2004 ouster of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. He was threatened, harassed and beaten. In October 2004, he was arrested illegally while feeding the children their only meal of the day.
>
> While the government could present no evidence of wrong doing, a judge released Fr. Gerry after seven weeks in jail. The government then forced the judge out of office and found a more compliant substitute. The persecution was renewed last July 21, when he was arrested, again illegally, at a funeral. He has been imprisoned for five months despite the government producing no evidence against him.[17]

[17] Paul Farmer, "Christmas in a Haitian Prison," *The Miami Herald*, 2 January 2006.

I must be clear from the outset that I was a very small part of a big situation which played itself on the international political stage. Amnesty International had adopted Fr. Gerry as a prisoner of conscience. In early December 42 U.S. representatives, led by Maxine Waters called for his release, as did Senators Ted Kennedy, Tom Harkin and Christopher Dodd. Various human rights groups called for his release, and there were demonstrations in Port-au-Prince, Miami, Boston, New York and San Francisco. Hundreds of people were writing letters demanding Fr. Gerry's release but to no avail.

Description of obstacles encountered and solutions that occurred

The demand for Fr. Gerry's release from prison where he was being held without charges was one thing, but reports of his deteriorating health gave the situation a new exigency. His presenting symptoms were a swelling on both sides of his neck which he initially though was due to a beating he had received in jail. But as the swelling on his neck increased, followed by fatigue and swollen lymph nodes elsewhere[18] concern about Fr. Gerry's condition grew.

Paul called on his way to the airport after his visit Fr. Gerry. He was able to examine him and surreptitiously draw two vials of blood while other prisoners distracted the guards. He told me Fr. Gerry insisted on praying, singing and cheerfully introduced him to some of his jailers. Paul then asked me, "Do you think you can find a doctor who can help with a diagnosis? I was only able to draw two tubes of blood and time is of the essence as the blood will not hold up for long." Both Paul and I knew this was not going to be an easy thing to do. It was late Friday afternoon two days before Christmas – not the best time to be seeking immediate medical assistance. Paul was entering the US with

[18] Ibid.

contraband blood belonging to a highly political and controversial figure, not to mention other matters such as patient confidentiality and payment for a series of very expensive tests. I called on the help of a brilliant and kind University of Miami hematologist and an old family friend, Dr. Y.S. Ahn. Dr. Ahn has been my mother's doctor some thirty years ago and ran the research project that our family created in her memory. I explained the situation to Dr. Ahn and he agreed to help, telling me to bring the blood samples to him at the medical school as soon they arrived in the United States. I picked Paul and Didi up at the airport, dropped his family off at home, and we went straight to the hospital where Dr. Ahn was waiting for us. It was after dark and things were shutting down for the holiday but Dr. Ahn was going to run the tests himself and promised to get back to us as soon as possible. Two hours later, when our families were gathered for dinner at my house, Dr. Ahn called and gave Paul a diagnosis – acute chronic lymphocytic leukemia. With proper treatment, Fr. Gerry had a good prognosis. However, the possibility of this type of cancer developing into a more aggressive type was very troublesome, and in any case, Fr. Gerry needed immediate treatment.

Now Fr. Jerry's release became the focus of our activity. Paul called him in jail and told him of his diagnosis and the plans to bring him to Miami for treatment. As noted above, the demand for Fr. Gerry's release was already a major political initiative – his diagnosis only added to the cry for his release. At the risk of seeming grossly political (which I don't think I am), it occurred to me that everyone calling for his release was a Democrat. What we need, I thought, is a Republican to champion our cause. I turned to my old friend, Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen. Illy and I are personal friends and I am outside of her political life. I have

known her since our daughters were in pre-school together and we have cleaned the toilets and slept on bunk beds at Girl Scout camp, and watched the girls grow from pre-schoolers to college girls. Our girls have remained friends and I have a very high opinion of Illy as a mother. I sent Illy an e-mail asking if she would be willing to help. I was sure she knew of the situation as it had been receiving widespread publicity. She was on a ski vacation with the family and I will always remember the message she sent from her Blackberry. "I am not a big fan of his but if he is your friend, I guess he is my new best pal." I was fairly certain that the only person who could assist with Fr. Gerry's release was Secretary of State of Condoleezza Rice and told Illy so. She put me in touch with her aide and we spoke at length. I provided her with the details and made the plea that we would not want Fr. Jean-Juste to die in prison under our watch. I did go out on a limb a little by promising to provide medical treatment and support. A few days later I was faxed a copy of the following letter to Secretary Rice. The letter signed Illeana Ros-Lehtinen, Member of Congress read as follows:

> I am contacting you regarding Father Gerald Jean-Juste in Haiti. Information provided to me by constituents state that: Father Jean-Juste was arrested on July 21, 2005; is currently imprisoned in Haiti; was recently diagnosed with leukemia; and is in dire need of medical assistance. Father Jean-Juste needs to be released in order to seek proper medical treatment.
>
> On humanitarian grounds, I ask that you consider taking such steps as are deemed necessary to secure Father Jean-Juste's release and transport to the United States to receive possibly life-saving medical treatment. This type of cancer could develop into a more aggressive strain that could potentially spread quickly throughout his system if left untreated. Medical care has already been pledged by the Jay Weiss Center in Miami, Florida and thus would come at no cost to the taxpayer.
>
> As you evaluate this unique case, I would request that you give due consideration to the humanitarian merit of the situation surrounding Father

> Jean-Juste and provide much needed assistance in accordance with all applicable rules and regulations. Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

I called to thank her aide and asked if Illy could call Secretary Rice to put a little more urgency into the request. A few weeks later, Harvard doctor Jen Furin was on her way to Haiti to escort Fr. Gerry back to the States for medical treatment. How did it happen that he was finally released? I am not sure anyone knows with certainty. Like most political matters, we probably prefer not to know completely. I like to think I did my small, behind the scenes part in helping to get Fr. Gerry released.

The next problem that needed immediate attention was his treatment and care. For this, we turned to my sister, Laurie Weiss Nuell, who is on the Public Health Trust and familiar with the system at Jackson Memorial Hospital, the amazing public hospital in Miami that serves the indigent poor and is a training hospital for the University of Miami Medical School. The Trust has strict rules about providing care to non-Dade County residents and special permission is needed for any exception and difficult to obtain. Laurie set right to work and by the time Fr. Gerry arrived, his treatment was arranged. There was a big press conference held at Jackson and an article in the Miami Herald with a big photo of Fr. Gerry and Dr. Ahn. There was something lovely about the Korean doctor and the Haitian priest standing arm in smiling – as gracious a gesture of welcome and hospitality as I have ever seen.

I visited Fr. Gerry (and met him for the first time) in the hospital a few days later. There was a guard stationed outside his door – the hospital wasn't taking any chances while he was under their watch. He was still undergoing tests and getting ready to begin his chemotherapy. Ill as he was, he was full of life with a booming voice and large spirit.

We visited for a few minutes and he was gracious and grateful. I asked for a blessing as I was leaving and we prayed and sang together.

The great news is that Fr. Gerry's medical outcomes have been excellent. He tolerated the chemotherapy treatment well and bravely. Unfortunately, he continues to have other problems of a political nature - the Vatican who has lifted his faculties and he is unable to return to his beloved people in Haiti where he would almost certainly face incarceration or worse.

Preliminary Analysis

So many people played a part in providing a hospitable welcome to Fr. Gerry. As I said, I just played a small behind the scenes part of an international political drama. The location of this call to hospitality was Haiti and the United States, specifically Miami. Again, it was a blending of the religious and secular cultures. I hope we acted in an intentional and responsible manner although I do know that there were numerous risks associated with these events. There were many hosts on different levels. Paul Farmer, whose life is spent in providing hospitality to the poor, took a significant risk going to the jail to see Fr. Gerry and continuing to advocate and direct both the medical and practical activities. Dr. Ahn never hesitated to get involved regardless of the complications or inconvenience. Jackson Memorial Hospital, in spite of their over burdened system, found a place to care for Fr. Gerry. Jean-Juste was a stranger to me. He may well have been viewed as an enemy to Congresswoman Ros-Lehtinen and Secretary Rice, and surely he fits the description of "in distress" for his situation was one of extreme hardship. As far as expectation of return, the only outcome we ever hoped for was Fr. Gerry's recovery

and his ability to be able to return to his ministry among the Haitian poor. Truly, it was a pleasure and a privilege to work with Paul Farmer and be of assistance to Fr. Gerry, and I remain grateful for the opportunity.

RESPONSE:
PAUL FARMER, MD, PhD.

I've known Fr. Jean-Juste for close to two decades. I believe he was the first Haitian ever ordained a priest in the United States, and he has always been interested in the social-justice messages of the Gospels. I first met him in the eighties in Miami, where he founded the Haitian Refugee Center. After 1990—when Haiti's first democratic elections were held—I heard that he'd returned to work with the urban poor of his own country, as a parish priest, and was happy to hear it. I ran into him a few times in the nineties, when his advocacy for his parishioners was constant but when his country's (and ours) commitment to democracy was not, and was always relieved to know that such a fine, and hospitable, member of our Church was laboring in urban Haiti *on behalf of the poorest.*

There were a number of coups d'etat in Haiti in the 16 years since Fr. Jean-Juste returned to Haiti, but two were significant: 1991 and 2004. In both instances, I have argued (and many authoritative sources support me), there were significant transnational efforts to unseat a popular democracy that promoted basic social and economic rights for the poor in keeping with, for example, the Gospel according to Matthew and to all Catholic teachings about hospitality. It was during these coups, these years, that Fr. Jean-Juste, whose message was always based on these corporal works of mercy, had the most troubles. His critics, who were to be found among the Haitian elite and the conservative components of the Church hierarchy, said that he was "meddling in politics." But in the view of most, he was merely following the teachings of Christ, with a special focus on hospitality.

For his efforts, Fr. Jean-Juste was arrested several times during the non-democratic interregna that have followed the coups. Since he was, and is, a prominent figure in Haitian society, his detentions without charges were reported in papers both Haitian and American. I read that he had been beaten, mistreated in other ways, and was falling ill, and followed the situation as best I could. I listened to his messages from prison, and felt that he was encouraging his friends and supporters to focus on the rights of the poor, on democracy, and on prisoners far more unfortunate than he. His detention was, of course, troubling to me, a friend and admirer. Should I be doing more to help him, more beyond signing petitions and writing

letters? In August of 2005 (I think; I will have to check) I was in Rwanda, and saw—on CNN of all places—that Amnesty International had named Fr. Jean-Juste a "prisoner of conscience." I was relieved to learn it, since I was busy with other projects in other countries and, although a member of prison-reform and human-rights organizations felt that my time would best be spent on medical pursuits. Perhaps I wished to put Father Jean-Juste's problems out of mind a bit, and feel that others were working hard on his behalf.

In November, I heard that he was sicker still—he'd lost weight, had fevers, and had what's known in medical jargon as lymphadenopathy. For heaven's sake, I thought, surely he, a prominent political prisoner, would have some help not only from Amnesty International, but from Human Rights Watch, the Catholic Church, and from the International Committee of the Red Cross, all of which had adopted his, and other political prisoners' cause.

I was wrong—he remained in prison and sick. It was towards the end of 2005 that I contacted my friend Jennie Weiss Block. What should I, an American physician, do? A friend was sick and in prison; he was "famous" but not even diagnosed, much less receiving appropriate medical care. I asked not only Jennie, but many others, but I remember her response to this rhetorical question: "When I was in prison, you visited me." She didn't say much more.

I decided to go to the prison and attempt to diagnose Fr. Jean-Juste (I'd been working, along with thousands of others and for months, for his release). The person I asked to help me was Jennie Block. Why? Not because she was a fellow clinician. Simply because she was, and is, the most "hospitable" (in theological and other senses) person I know.

I asked a lot of Jennie. I asked her to support me in what I knew to be a dangerous enterprise. I asked her to make all of the arrangements for a proper diagnosis (meaning, picking me up at the airport, transporting specimens to laboratories where she, not I, had connections) and for the release of Fr. Jean-Juste for treatment of whatever illness he might be shown to have. I asked her, in other words, to live out her reading of the notion of hospitality.

I cannot exaggerate her contribution to what happened afterwards. It was Jennie who made arrangements for me should anything untoward happen during my attempts to visit (and thus diagnose and treat) Fr. Jean-Juste. It was Jennie who contacted the laboratories and specialists who provided the diagnosis (leukemia; it was Jennie who helped organize the international effort that led, ultimately, to his release for treatment; it was Jennie who quietly made sure that he had access to the specialty care he

needed for his illness; it was Jennie who afforded the hospitality that he needed in Miami. She continues to work behind the scenes to help him now that he is nearing the end of his treatment and seeks to return to chaotic Haiti.

I am not sure I'm being asked to comment on the six key components to an experience of hospitality as stated in the instructions, but would like to make some observations on each of them as regards Jennie and her actions.

1) Context and motivation

Within the Christian narrative in the midst of the secular world

What I would like to add in contemplating context and motivation is that the secular world of human rights organizations, including the world's most influential, was ineffective in securing the release and treatment of a prominent political prisoner in Haiti, squarely within the domains of U.S. influence. In a country in which the de facto government was essentially created by the current U.S. administration, how was it that we, as Americans, were unable to alter the fates of those within Haiti's prisons? Many of us expressed skepticism regarding our government's lack of influence and action, but skepticism—sometimes the refuge of the secular—is by definition not enough. It was Jennie's quiet activism that made the difference in seeking to put in place the true definition of hospitality as laid out so clearly in the Gospels.

2) Personal attributes

Intentional, responsible, compassionate, humble, generous, gracious

The long narrative with which I began my essay says it all: what was needed, in this instance, was an "intentional, responsible, compassionate, humble, generous, gracious" act, or set of acts, that would lead to the outcome that so many desired in this case: the evaluation and release ("visit the prisoners, visit the sick") of a fellow human, who happened to be himself an activist who worked, and works, on behalf of this hemisphere's poorest people, the Haitian poor. Without this intentional, "outcome-focused" intervention, I do not believe that Father Jean-Juste would be alive today.

3) Actions

Attention to physical, psychological and spiritual needs

There can be no real attention to psychological and spiritual needs if we ignore the physical conditions of people like Fr. Jean-Juste, who was suffering with a treatable cancer within a Haitian prison. Jennie's actions were based in her belief that all of these types of needs must be addressed.

4) Location

Anywhere there is space and recognition

What place, other than Haiti, speaks more clearly to the privileged of Miami? Although I've made this point for many, many years, it was Jennie who made it most clearly, in my view—even though she did her work of hospitality humbly and in silence. The space was seen by few, alas.

5) Participants

Host and guest, strangers, friends, enemies, and those who are oppressed

Again, Haiti is probably the place in which there are more oppressed neighbors, in the sense of the Gospels, than in any other country in this half of the world. In mobilizing friends and acquaintances around the Jean-Juste case, Jennie brought together some unlikely bedfellows—radicals (in the Gospel sense) working with the detained priest; other political prisoners in Haiti, who rallied to the cause of their sick friend; human rights groups; her youngest sister; hematologists and other Miami doctors; a Republican congresswoman with connections to the current administration in Washington; et cetera. So with an eye towards the oppressed, and those who serve them, Jennie served in what would likely be termed, these days, a "convening capacity." But these efforts seem more like hospitality as defined above.

6) Expected return and outcome

No expected return, outcome of social transformation

Jennie's lack of interest in "expected returns" to herself is manifest, over a year later, in the results of her interventions. These results: no crass return for her, but rather the diagnosis, release, treatment, and cure of Father Jean-Juste, and greater awareness of the plight of political prisoners in that troubled country. Jennie's "disinterested interest" in Haiti, and in hospitality there, are far broader than the single example she has chosen to highlight. Since that time, she's already made her first visit to Haiti and is expecting to visit again soon as part of her doctoral project. As for outcomes of social transformation, what better way to ensure that social transformation ensue than to help protect the health and well-being of those engaged explicitly in efforts to transform Haiti? (I know, too, that Jennie and her family, including her father and sister, have long been involved in civic activities designed to make Miami a better place, especially for the poor.)

To summarize, a prominent social activist in a Haitian prison without charges falls ill; the mainstream human rights groups that have

adopted his cause are incapable of reaching him to make sure he is diagnosed and treated.

Extreme social disruption, political violence, and confusion about the primary causes of this disruption and violence (in fact, Miami may well be the city in which this confusion reigns supreme; Washington, DC, would be its only rival. Jennie could not look to local sources for help in lifting this confusion and her intervention was based solely on principle and on her own inner compass, for which the true north, we know, is hospitality as defined in the Gospels).

Obstacles arose at every step: from supporting me, an American physician seeking to enter a Haitian prison, to making a diagnosis and providing care to someone who could never pay for either diagnosis or care, the road was strewn with obstacles. Frankly, I can think of no one, other than Jennie Block, who might have surmounted them all. Her "pragmatic solidarity" with the Haitian poor, through her efforts on behalf of one of their chief advocates, has been a classic example of hospitality, in part because of the numerous obstacles in her path.

Enthusiastic engagement in and patience for "practical assistance" is surely one of the most under-rated of virtues (perhaps this is why Jennie often reminds us that "patience leads the virtues"), and it's in this arena that Jennie truly excels. I have met no one more focused on the drudgery of practical assistance than Jennie Weiss Block—and as I've come to know her, and know more about her intellectual inclinations, I know that her commitment to practical assistance is based on her theology of hospitality.

Jennie Block's personal attributes are, as we say in medicine, TNTC—too numerous to count. But among those in evidence during the specific case mentioned were patience (of course); humility (the practical details of making phone calls and drawing on personal and family connections to "pull off" the diagnosis and care of a political prisoner from Haiti required great humility, I'm sure); commitment to a vision of hospitality not easily derailed by local notions of right and wrong (Miami being an epicenter or home seat of a propaganda machine that would cast Father Jean-Juste's contributions in doubt); and of course kindness to complete strangers.

From my point of view, I can think of no way in which the demands of the situation were not addressed effectively by Jennie. As my own familiarity with Jennie's view of hospitality was established well before the Jean-Juste affair, her response and participation in this process did nothing to change my view of her understanding of hospitality; it merely served to confirm it. I do believe, however, that others in Miami

and beyond were instructed by her acts of pragmatic solidarity. Certainly Fr. Jean-Juste was pleased to meet Americans who shared his definition of hospitality.

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE MINSTERIAL CASE STUDIES

The purpose of these three case studies is to "describe the contemporary theory-laden practices that give rise to the practical questions that generate all theological reflection." [19] Browning cautions that this is a "multidimensional hermeneutic enterprise"[20] that should not be conceived narrowly or just as a sociological task. At one level, these three case studies speak for themselves. They are the stories of human pathos and suffering, failures of institutions including families, the Church, and governmental bodies, political upheaval, human and natural disasters and the fragility of human life, both physically and psychologically. At the same time, they are stories of Christian hope and extraordinary generosity. However, in order to adequately address Browning's criteria for the descriptive phase, further investigation is required. The questions of "what we are actually doing, and what reason, ideals and symbols we use to interpret what we are doing"[21] must be given in-depth consideration. The sources of authority and legitimation on which we base our practical wisdom and decision making need to be examined with care. This is the task of the next two chapters where historical theology is presented. Using our case studies as a guide, what particular theological areas surface and require a closer read? Three come to mind, each related in some way to the initial claims laid out in Chapter One. First, is an ecclesiology question. What is the role of the

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[19] Browning, 47.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid., 48.

Church in the practice of hospitality? Second, what is the role of the individual acting as member of a community of believers committed to offering hospitality? Finally what is the role of morality, particularly as it relates to "Jesus Christ in the normative role as the concrete universal of Christian ethics."[22] The life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ? While each of these areas are addressed in-depth and from various perspectives in the following chapters, I would like to elaborate a little further on each topic as specifically related to the case studies.

The Role of the Church

All three case studies have a decidedly Christian orientation but are extra-ecclesial, that is, they take place outside of the parameters of the official Church. They are good examples of the blending of the sacred and the secular, as referenced in Chapter One. The "official" Church, at least at the diocesan level and above, was essentially absent from the picture in all case studies. There are varying reasons for this, some of them quite legitimate, and perhaps assistance to situations like these case studies are beyond the role and scope of the official Church. In the post-Katrina period, the diocese was unable to offer any visible support to the Dominicans. They had their own problems of serious magnitude and were scrambling to reorganize and survive. When the Miami Archdiocese was asked if they could provide any help for Fr. Jean-Juste, the answer was a quick and flat no. The point is not to critique the church, but to attempt to clarify the social location of Christian hospitality. The location of hospitality, then, rests outside of organized ministries and official programs of the Church and with people who are attempting to put their faith into discernable action. All of the players in the case studies

[22] William C. Spohn, *Go and Do Likewise: Jesus and Ethics* (New York: Continuum, 1999), 2.

were actively attempting to respond to specific situations as Christians. In a very real sense, we were the Church, a community of disciples attempting to "Go and do likewise" (Lk 10:37).

The Role of the Individual within a Community of Believers

These case studies point out the link between the personal and communal dimensions of hospitality. While I deeply appreciate the kind remarks of the respondents, I do want to reiterate that in all cases, the personal actions took place within a community. In the practice of Christian hospitality, both the host and the guest always need a community of support. This is evidenced by the fact that at no time did I, or anyone else for that matter, ever act independently. As William Spohn writes, "Committed Christian life coalesces around the overall profile of Jesus' life and destiny. The full story of Jesus becomes the paradigm for Christian life, which is primarily life in common. No one can be a Christian alone. God's reign of justice and love in a universal community of reconciliation has to begin somewhere specific. Following Christ happens locally, not ideologically."[23]

Writing in *Crossing the River: Creating a Conceptual Revolution in Community and Disability*, David B. Schwartz makes the claim "The only real protections for a person are other people."[24] Schwartz's topic is the protection of vulnerable people, in this case, people with disabilities; however, I believe his claim has much wider applicability. The category of 'vulnerable people' extends far beyond just people with

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[23] Ibid., 5.

[24] David B. Schwartz, *Crossing the River: Creating a Conceptual Revolution in Community and Disability* (Brookline, MA: Brookline Books, 1992), 166.

disabilities. Conditions of extreme vulnerability are widespread as seen in our case studies. He points to the error in thinking that formal services offered through institutions can take the place of personal relationships. An institution "offers only a service for consolation, while we ourselves are consoled and supported by friends, family, and community."[25] The three case studies support the claim that the only real protections for a vulnerable person are other people who, in the name of the Christian community, desire "to share a common life that naturally brings forth compassionate and effective action."[26] The willingness to put oneself aside and share valuable resources of time, money and even personal safety is precisely what it means to be Christ to one another through hospitality.

This insight leads me to the final point, the moral implications of hospitality. I stated earlier that one of the hallmarks of hospitality is that it "comes looking for you." When this occurs the question is not "Should I say yes?" but more like "How can I say no?" The moral life finds its expression in the mundane questions of daily life not in the grand questions of the world situation. Few among us will decide to launch a nuclear attack but most of us will decide on whether to take the help someone in need of medical care, open our home to a person who is struggling to find there way, or donate our time and financial resources to people whose lives have been devastated by tragedy and disaster.

Each of these topics – ecclesiology, community and morality – will be considered carefully through the lens of Scripture, Christian history, conversion and Eucharist and

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[25] Ibid.

[26] Spohn, 4.

the works of mercy in the coming chapters. Before that task is undertaken, it is first necessary to describe hospitality from yet one more perspective.

HOSPITALITY FROM THE UNDERSIDE

Lest I, or anyone reading this thesis, give in to the temptation to romanticize the process of giving and receiving hospitality, I now must address what I call "hospitality from the underside." As hard as we might try, and as well intended as we might be, sometimes hospitality fails – miserably and totally. Three additional topics – hospitality as disaster, the rejected guest, and hospitality to gain advantage are now presented to add a realistic dimension to the conversation.

Hospitality as Disaster

I was personally involved in a situation that was beyond one's worst imagining. About nine years ago, I received a call from a Dominican priest asking me to help him arrange provide hospitality to a group of about ninety boys and young men and their chaperones that were traveling from France and singing in parishes around the country. He was placing the young men in homes of parishioners and asked me if I could host some of their chaperones including the Dominican father who served as their chaplain. I had a full house with six adults for three nights and was happy to provide meals and transportation. On the last evening before their departure, we arranged a final dinner – a poolside barbeque for my houseguests, some of my family, and some of the boys whose host families had to leave town. I was in the kitchen making Caesar salad dressing, chatting with the Dominican friend who served as host coordinator, when my little niece, who was four at the time, came in and said, "The boy's eyes are closed." Rushing to the

poolside we discovered that a nineteen year old young man and his friend has been playing a game seeing how long he could hold his breath under water. He fainted, his lungs filled with fluid, and nothing the rescue squad at my poolside or in the hospital could do to save him.

What is there to say in the face of such a devastating event? We were shocked and terribly sad. No one would go in my pool for months until I had it blessed and went in myself. My little niece was in therapy for months after what she observed that evening. The parish community that had welcomed this group with such joy and openness wept as they departed. It took us days to finish the police reports so the body could be shipped back to France. As terrible as it was for us, I could not stop thinking about his parents and the loss that would mark their lives forever. I pray for them still. We made the trip to France a few months later to meet his family. I knew his mother would want more details about how he son had lost his life.

Fortunately most failures of hospitality are not as catastrophic as just narrated. However, the number of things that can go awry are limitless. I have known of situations where money and medication has been stolen, severe psychological problems created a dangerous situation, guests were poorly behaved and rude, and hosts were overwhelmed with fatigue and bankrupt resources.

What are we to do what hospitable outreach has disastrous results? "Those who practice substantial hospitality live in the tension between finiteness and grace, heartbreak and miracle, tragedy and gift."[27] We must be very realistic about our own strengths and weaknesses and remain humble about our abilities, our successes and our failures. Those who take the call to hospitality seriously will always be confronted with

[27] Pohl, 134.

the tension of "endless needs and finite resources." Running smack into our own limitations is as much a part of hospitality as opening the door to welcome a stranger.

The Rejected Guest

It is often said that history is told from the perspective of the winners. This can be applied to hospitality as well, for everything I consult seems to be told from the perspective of the bountiful host, and occasionally, the grateful guest. The voice and perspective of the "rejected guest" never seems to make it into the books and articles. I had two such experiences just this year. I share these with some reluctance, probably for the same reasons that other rejected guests chose to keep the stories of the rejection to themselves – a mixture of embarrassment, and a desire to not draw attention to oneself. However, share them I must for the story of hospitality is not complete without at least an acknowledgment of the underside of hospitality, in this case the rejected guest.

My self defined life of radical availability is not conducive to a project of this nature – the time to read, think, research and write requires blocks of time that are virtually impossible to arrange at home. Early in the fall of 2006 I realized that I needed to go away for the several months in the spring to write this thesis-project. To make a long and somewhat painful story short, I spent three frustrating months trying to find a place to go. I requested hospitality, first, at the theological center on the west coast of Florida, and later at one of the priories in my Province. Both requests met with a resounding no – for different reasons that in the long run probably don't matter. At the center, where the esteemed Dominican, Fr. Gerard Austin, OP teaches in his retirement years, the Chancellor of the Diocese didn't think it would "look right" to have a man and

woman living there together. At the priory, some of my own Dominican brothers were unable to offer me a place – the reasons why have never been fully shared. Both events were rather discouraging and ironic considering my topic is hospitality.[28]

The rejected guest is, of course, in good company for there was no room in the inn for the savior of the world. As a person with options, I was able to regroup and organize a place for myself. However, meditating on the rejected guests for whom there are no other options is deeply disturbing. When we dare to say "no" to a request for hospitality that is within our capability to offer, woe to us.

Hospitality to Gain Advantage

I love to give parties for my friends. I can't think of a single close friend for whom I have not given a birthday party, or a wedding or baby shower or some other event to highlight a special occasion. I enjoy the preparation for the party as much as the party itself. I love to decorate and set a lovely table and plan a nice meal and make sure the guests have a festive time. I know that my friends enjoy and appreciate the attention and for me it is one of life's great pleasures. While joyful entertainment of family and friends can be good and life giving, it can have a darker side for both the host and the guests. The practice of Christian hospitality is not magnanimous gestures of goodwill aimed at highlighting the differences in power, social status and resources. It is not about seeking an imbalance in relationship through power. It is indeed about just the opposite. There are those who would argue that going to a lot of trouble for guests is not necessary. I think hospitality is a bit more nuanced than this flat claim. Going to a lot of trouble for

[28] I would like to note that two other priories in the Southern Province both came forward and invited me to their communities to write. Neither invitation worked out but it I deeply appreciated the offers.

guests can be a sign of care, concern and welcome as long as it is not done selectively or to show off. The times spent gathering as friends can be holy and grace-filled. The host however, must always remain entirely mindful that hospitality shares the same "great reversal" tendencies found in the Christian message. Things are not what they seem. The host is the "footwasher" not the Pharisee. Hosts often get more than they give. They instinctively understand that the guest, the stranger, and the radical other can come bearing intangible gifts of great value. Guests who are being courted or made to feel inferior can tell that equality is not part of the equation and will feel uncomfortable, and the opportunity for Gospel hospitality vanishes quicker than the delicious hors d'oeuvres.

Nor is hospitality just some tame endeavor where the polite conversation among like folk takes place. "Christian hospitality has always been partly remedial, counteracting the social stratification of the large society by providing a more modest and equal welcome to all."[29] In offering Christian hospitality we are called to move boundaries around and challenge prevailing social and economic arrangements. A few raised eyebrows about who we are entertaining are generally a good thing!

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter, four topics were covered as a part of the "thick description" of the ministerial praxis of hospitality under consideration in this thesis-project. First, an explanation of ministry as a way of life based on the theology of the Second Vatican Council's universal call to holiness. Next, three ministerial case studies were presented to show the complex nature of the provision of hospitality. The socio-political situation, obstacles and solutions, and interactions and work of many people were detailed in these

[29] Pohl, 63.

case studies. A critical analysis of the case studies was presented identifying three key issues – ecclesiology, community and morality - for in-depth examination in the next phase of the thesis. Finally, hospitality from the "underside" was examined to add a realistic perspective. The insights gleaned from the descriptive phase of our inquiry will now be engaged with the Christian tradition as I move to the topic of hospitality in the Scriptures and Christian history.

CHAPTER 3

HOSPITALITY IN THE CONTEXT OF THE SCRIPTURES AND CHRISTIAN HISTORY

INTRODUCTION

Don Browning argues that recent theological scholarship is likely to see theology as systematic reflection on the historical self-understanding of a particular religious tradition.[1] He goes on to explain that when "theology is seen as careful and systematic reflection on the self-understanding of a particular religious tradition such as Christianity, Judaism or even Protestantism or Catholicism, interesting and puzzling concepts such as myth, story, legend, symbol, and metaphor being to play important roles."[2] In this chapter and the next, hospitality is systematically considered from an historical perspective within the Christian tradition in general, and within the Roman Catholic tradition specifically. Browning's insight is critical to this investigation as any understanding of hospitality will always be coded by historical self-understanding and learned through the personal experience of breaking open and entering into the tradition which more often than not occurs through the "interesting and puzzling" concepts he suggests such as symbol, metaphor, parable, and legend. The insight and knowledge that come with intimate ownership of the tradition are gleaned from a range of experiences and diverse sources. Several of these sources are now presented to broaden our discussion on hospitality. Chapter Three considers Scripture and the history of hospitality and Chapter Four looks at conversion, Eucharist and the corporal and spiritual

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[1] Browning, 5.

[2] Ibid.

works of mercy. Each of these Christian "texts"[3] forms what Browning refers to as the "outer envelope" – that is, "its fund of inherited narratives and practices that tradition has delivered to us and that always surround our practical thinking."[4] Theological investigation of Christian hospitality demands that we take nothing on face value but always search for the fuller meaning that is embedded in our traditions. It is the fuller meaning of hospitality within the Scriptures and Christian history that is now considered.

HOSPITALITY IN THE SCRIPTURES

There is a well developed hospitality tradition in the Hebrew Scriptures. Some of the more notable passages include Abraham welcoming the Lord at Mamre (Gn 18:1-15), Lot providing housing to angelic guests (Gen 19); Joseph hosting his brothers (Gn 45:4–15); Elijah receiving hospitality from a poor widow (1 Kings 17:17–18); and the wealthy woman of Shumen greeting Elisha (2 Kings 4:8-17). There is both continuity and departure from a pattern of hospitality established in the Old Testament. The elements of continuity are very strong in terms of the way God commands his people to provide hospitality to strangers. "The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself" (Lev 19:33-34). There is discontinuity as well, particularly in terms of the laws of ritual purity and multiple admonishments not to have contact with those who are unclean.[5]

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[3] The term "text" is used here along the lines of David Tracy's thesis that "texts" includes all major expressions of the Christian tradition. Tracy claims the two principle sources for theology are Christian texts and common human experience and that the contemporary theological task involves a critical correlation of the results of the investigation of these two sources. (*Blessed Rage for Order: The New Pluralism in Theology*, New York: Seabury Press, 1975, 43 – 45).

[4] Browning, 11.

[5] Bretherton, 129-130.

Volumes have been written on the topic of hospitality in the Christian Scriptures from differing perspectives. The scope and focus of this thesis-project does not permit a detailed examination of the many hospitality related events in the four Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles and the Pauline and Deutro-Pauline corpus. In the Acts of the Apostles, and the Pauline and Deutro-Pauline writings, hospitality is both an important theme and a concrete activity. Note the image of hospitality cited in Acts 28: 2–7: "The natives showed us unusual kindness. Since it had begun to rain and was cold, they kindled a fire and welcomed all of us around it." The itinerant Paul also gives many examples of hospitality that he, along with his co-workers Titus, Timothy and others receive (Rom 16:1-2, 23; 1 Cor 4:17, 16:10-11, 2 Cor 8:16-24; Phil 2:19-32).

In this section, I will examine three themes of particular interest within the Scriptures as related to the three guiding claims outlined in Chapter One. The first of these claims is "hospitality is deeply tied to Christian identity and is a central theme woven through all aspects of the Tradition." Christian identity is formed, first and foremost, by following the example of Jesus. Therefore, the actions of Jesus as host and guest will be examined for insights on Christian formation. The second claim "hospitality is a moral practice that is essential to the intentionally lived Christian life" is made clear in a number of "hospitality mandates" in the Scriptures. The third claim that has its foundation in the Scriptures is "hospitality has the potential to be socially transformative for both the giver and the receiver, and directs Christians towards the building of a community with a realized eschatology." An exegesis of the story of Zacchaeus (Luke19:1-10) well illustrates the socially transformative power of hospitality.

The section closes by drawing some conclusions through "Lessons Learned from the Gospels."

"WHY DOES HE EAT WITH SINNERS AND TAX COLLECTORS?"[6] HOSPITALITY IN THE GOSPELS

Dual Identity: Following Jesus as Host and Guest

Christina Pohl claims "The dual identity of Jesus as stranger/guest and as host is a core image of the Christian faith. Jesus experienced the marginality, vulnerability and rejection of the stranger. During his ministry he was dependent on the hospitality of others and He was a host with no home, often an outsider, who offered welcome, healing, meals and recognition to many who were marginal in society."[7] Imagine for a minute what it must have been like to have Jesus as your guest. As far as we can tell, Jesus did not have his own home and so was entirely dependent on the hospitality of others for sleeping accommodations, bathing and resting, and meals. As he often traveled with a group of disciples and friends, including unattached women, having Jesus come to visit must have been both exhilarating and at least a little disruptive. Not only did his presence dominate, but he also went about turning daily life upside down by ignoring the social conventions of the day and associating with tax collectors, sinners, and women from all walks of life including prostitutes. At times, it must have been confusing and upsetting and equally wonderful and exciting. "The paradoxical understanding of Jesus

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[6] Variations on this question asked about Jesus are found in Mark 2:16; Matt 9:11; and Luke 15:1-2.

[7] Christina Pohl, "Hospitality from the Edges: The Significance of Marginality in the Practice of Welcome," *The Annual of Society of Christian Ethics* (1995), 125.

as both guest and host undergirds all practices of Christian hospitality."[8] A close analysis of Jesus' actions a guest and host is a primary lesson in Christian formation. It is helpful to look at the several images of Jesus in the role of guest and host and to consider the paradoxical nature of his actions as guest and host as indicators for forming Christian identity.

Jesus Dining with Marginal People

Luke Bretheron describes Jesus' approach to hospitality in this way. "Instead of securing his identity, reputation and economic well-being through mimesis of the conventional moral, social and economic norms, he rests them on identifying with the poor and the outcasts."[9]

> And as he sat down to dinner in the house, many tax collectors and sinners came and were sitting with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" (Matt 9:10-13)

This question was asked three times in the Gospels, in this passage from Matthew and again in Luke 15:1–2 and Mark: 2-16. Jesus responds to the impertinent question from his critics from two different perspectives. First, he subtly reveals his compassionate strategy and salvific mission. "I desire mercy, not sacrifice. For I have come to call not the righteous but sinners" (Matt 9:10-13). And then, to those that admonished him for sharing meals and hospitality with the poor, the outcasts and the sinners, he delivered some mighty bad news. "Truly, I tell you, the tax collector and the prostitutes are going into the Kingdom of God ahead of you" (Matt 21:31).

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[8] Ibid.,126.

[9] Bretherton, 132-133.

Even when visiting in the home of a Pharisee, Jesus raises up a person of marginal status as an example. While they are at dinner, a woman, who was known as a sinner, quietly enters during dinner. The woman weeps and tenderly bathes Jesus' feet with her tears, drying them with her hair and anointing his feet with expensive ointment from an alabaster jar. (Luke 7:36-50; Matt 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9). Simon is not pleased to have his dinner party crashed by woman of poor reputation and proclaims "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what kind of woman this is who is touching him – she is a sinner" (Luke 7:39). Jesus rebukes him for his critique of the gracious woman and his own lack of hospitality. "I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has bathed my feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. Therefore, I tell you, her sins, which were many, have been forgiven; hence she has shown great love" (Luke 7: 44-47). By his example, Jesus directs us to lavish attention and generous welcome on our guests.

Jesus as Compassionate Guest

If hospitality can be described as the "the willingness to enter into the chaos of another's life" then Jesus meets this criteria well. When Jesus weeps at the tomb of Lazarus, he is tender mercy to Martha and Mary as he shares their suffering.

> When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." Jesus began to weep. (John 11:35)

Sandra Schneiders calls this passage a touchingly human narrative that opens onto the experience of any believing Christian who has ever lived through the death of a loved one.[10] Wilhelm Wuellner mentions that "the disciples are a conspicuous non-entity in this and the following scene." This is a special time for Jesus for he is with his friends and able to express "deep emotional and spiritual agitation."[11] I once heard preaching where the Bethany community –Mary, Martha and Lazarus– were contrasted with the disciples. The disciples were described as "part of Jesus' responsibilities and fraught with issues and problems" and the Bethany friends as a place "where Jesus could let his hair down." The vernacular aside, there is something to this suggestion. Exactly why Jesus weeps is not clear but his emotional reaction is that he was "greatly disturbed and deeply moved." There is the issue of the lateness of his arrival – it took him two days to get there even when he heard that his beloved friend Lazarus was ill (John 11:6). There was the slight reproach in Mary's greeting, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died" (John 11:32). Sandra Schneiders calls the reproach of his delay "an implicit act of faith. Jesus' tears are an honest sharing in Mary's grief and perhaps her anger at death, the enemy of all life. Jesus, in his most fully human moment in the Fourth Gospel, legitimates human agony in the face of death, an agony he will feel for himself as she shrinks from the passion in Chapter 12."[12]

Jesus wept. There is something intensely comforting about those words. I sometimes give a poem Thomas Merton wrote when his brother died to friends who are

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[10] Sandra M. Schneiders, "Death in the Community of Eternal Life: History, Theology and Spirituality in John 11," *Interpretation* 41.1 (January 1987), 46.

[11] Wihlelm Wuellner, "Putting Life Back into the Lazarus Story and Its Reading: The Narrative Rhetoric of John 11 as the Narration of Faith," *Semeia*, no. 53.01 (1991), 119.

[12] Schneiders, 54.

grieving. There is a hauntingly beautiful and comforting line in Merton's poem that is reminiscent of this passage "...and Christ weeps in the ruins of my spring." Merton's grief is palpable. A young monk when he wrote this poem, several years before he become so famous, he writes of the loss of John Paul, his only brother and living relative who was reported missing in action – lost at sea.

Sweet brother, if I do not sleep
My eyes are flowers for your tomb
And if I cannot eat my bread,
My fasts shall live like willows where you died
If in the heat I find no water for my thirst
My thirst shall turn to spring for you, poor traveler

Where, in what desolate and smokey country,
Lies you poor body, lost and dead?
And in what landscape of disaster
Has your unhappy spirit lost its road?

Come, in my labor find a resting place
And in my sorrows lay your head,
Or rather take my life and blood
And buy yourself a better bed --
Or take my breath and take my death
And buy yourself a better rest.

When all the men of war are shot
And flags have fallen into dust
Your cross and mine shall tell men still
Christ died on each, for both of us.

For in the wreckage of your April Christ lies slain,
And Christ weeps in the ruins of my spring:
The money of Whose tears shall fall
Into your weak and friendless hand,
And buy you back to your own land:
The silence of Whose tears shall fall
Like bells upon your alien tomb.
Hear them and come: they call you home.[13]

[13] Thomas Merton, *The Seven Storey Mountain* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1948), 404.

Jesus wept. Sandra Schneiders understands what it means to have Christ weep in the ruins of our life. "Mary's statement is that of every believing Christian in history who is overcome with sorrow at the death of a loved one, who believes firmly that God could have prevented that death, and yet who clings in bewildered grief to the source of all consolation who is, paradoxically, the one who permitted the death."[14] This is a significant dimension of what I mean when I refer to being "Christ to one another." The willingness to weep with another in the ruins of their spring is compassionate hospitality at its best.

Jesus as Guest and Host

Often overlooked as a hospitality story, Jesus at guest as the wedding in Cana (John 2:1-11) shows another dimension of hospitality, when the guest is asked to become the host. John Koenig describes this when he says "The idea is that everyone brings gifts to the meeting, but the content of these treasures and talents may not be known, even to their bearers until they are exchanged in an atmosphere of hospitality."[15] Ritva Williams explains that in the ancient world "for the groom to run out of wine in the midst of his wedding celebration would be for him to lose his honor, his reputation, and his prestige in the community."[16] The interesting twist to the story is that the groom never finds out about this disaster; Mary handles it quietly and on her own. "Jesus' mother asks for a favor not for herself but for the bridegroom's family, which is on the verge of social

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[14] Schneiders, 54.

[15] Koenig, 8.

[16] Ritva Williams, "The Mother of Jesus at Cana: A Social Science Interpretation of John 2:1-12," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 59 (1997), 691.

humiliation. They, who have not wine, are the ones who are in need of patronage, of a share in someone else's honor."[17] Jesus was clearly not in the mood to rescue his host, ("Woman, my time has not yet come") but he was nonetheless sensitive to his host's embarrassing plight and his mother's insistent plea. He quietly complies, saving the groom's honor at this important event. Ritva Williams points out, "The irony, however, is that neither the chief steward, nor the guests, nor even the groom himself is aware of the fact that the wine is a gift to the groom's house. Only the servants and the disciples who witnessed the interaction between Jesus and his mother know of the crisis of the wine and know how it was solved."[18] A family disaster is averted because Jesus was willing to change roles from guest to host.

Jesus as Host

Jesus assumes the role of host when he feeds a tired and hungry crowd in the six different versions of the multiplication of the fish and loaves (Mark 6:14-29, 8:1-10; Matt 14:13-21; 15:32-39; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-13) Each gospel gives a slightly different version of the same wonderful account. The very fact that this story appears so many times gives it added importance. It is significant that the only miracle found in all four gospels is one involving food, feeding and Jesus as host. Wildly extravagant, this is an especially hard miracle to fathom because of the tangible properties. It is one thing to have see Jesus touch someone's eyes and they can instantly see, yet another to have some little loaves of bread and a few fish dramatically multiply in front of your very eyes!

[17] Ibid., 684.

[18] Ibid., 690.

Replete with meaning, God's bounty and concern for the deep hunger of humanity is revealed in Jesus' concern for the hungry crowd. Nathan Mitchell proposes that these stories "require readers to relinquish their exclusive focus on the highly cultic images of the Last Supper and to redirect attention to the memory and meaning of those meals in which Jesus fed the hungry and responded immediately to real human needs through the extravagant gesture of the multiplication of loaves and fishes."[19] There are explicit Eucharistic overtones in these passages. "Taking the five loaves and two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before the people" (Mark 6:41). Note the Eucharistic language "took, blessed, broke and gave." Nathan Mitchell includes this passage as a significant way to understand the meaning of the Eucharist. "These stories challenge Christians to remember that Eucharistic origins lie not in Jesus' last meal but in all those events where Jesus (as guest or host) satisfied hunger, announced the unbridled joy of God's arrival in the present moment (God's reign), and offered healing and hope to the poor and needy."[20]

These passages have a deeply disturbing edge to them when put in contrast with the millions of people who do not eat from "the fragments of the five barley loaves." The job of sharing and multiplying is now ours and in these passages, we are being asked in no uncertain terms to provide so that others may partake in unlimited bounty that God has provided. Joseph Grassi points out, "When the pertinent passages in Matthew, Mark, and Luke are assembled and reviewed, there is no question that in these Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles discipleship is closely connected to sharing food with the hungry. This

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[19] Nathan Mitchell, *Real Presence: The Work of Eucharist*, New and expanded ed. (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 2001), 56.

[20] Ibid.

concern also appears in John's version of the multiplication of the loaves."[21] The greatest challenge in this passages where Jesus is host is for us to see our own role as host in sharing the bounty of our lives with the others – for there is enough to go around if we but share what we have. Nathan Mitchell sums it up well. "Perhaps the greatest challenge today is to do as Mark did: to refocus our understanding of the Last Supper by relocating its Eucharistic significance in the meals through which Jesus brought real food to the hungry, real healing to the sick and real rest to the weary."[22]

HOSPITALITY MANDATES: DIRECTIONS FOR THE MORAL LIFE

Jesus' mandates on hospitality as an essential moral practice for the intentionally lived Christian life could not be clearer. "Jesus preaches a radical hospitality to those in need, and he commands the same of anyone hoping to sit down at the messianic banquet."[23] Moral mandates linking hospitality to our behavior towards others are given in four areas; the organization of guest lists and social networks, who are neighbors are and how we are expected to treat them; what happens when we fail to offer hospitality, and the conditions for eternal life.

Invitation to the Outcasts

The first deals with how to organize our guest lists. In Luke 14:12–14, Jesus explains. "When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends or your

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[21] Joseph A. Grassi, *Broken Bread and Broken Bodies: The Lord's Supper and World Hunger* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1985), 59.

[22] Mitchell, 58.

[23] Patrick T. McCormick, *A Banqueter's Guide to the All-Night Soup Kitchen of the Kingdom of God* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2004), 47.

brothers or your relative or rich neighbors, in case they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous." This passage asks that we consider our motivation for who we invite into our homes and our lives, and especially the inclusion of people who are unable to reciprocate. Who are the poor among us today? Where and how to we encounter the poor? Are our lives so segregated that we do not even bump up against the poor? McCormack reminds us that "The poor are all the somebodies in our midst who cannot meet their basic needs, who cannot find enough food and drink, clothing or shelter, or comfort from other bodies. They are the bodies who cannot protect themselves and their children from hunger and thirst, cold and danger."[24] People who are victims of oppression, injustice and marginalization meet these criteria as well. Application of this mandate in the contemporary setting requires some interpretation. The poor may sometimes be people with financial resources but are marginalized by society for other reasons such as ethnicity, immigration status, or sexual orientation.

As a disability advocate I have critiqued the way the Scriptures use "the crippled, the lame and the blind" to create the "pity" model that further marginalize people with disabilities. Thanks to the disability rights movement, people with these disabilities are no longer necessarily people to be pitied and are likely to enjoy greater access to mainstream life and fuller equality and inclusion. Just because someone is blind or uses a wheelchair doesn't make them a social outcast, although families with members with a

[24] Ibid., 90.

disability are still more likely to live below the poverty line and be unemployed[25] and still may suffer injustice and oppression just because they happen to have a disability.

Interpretation of this passage goes beyond just the idea of inviting a person who is blind to a dinner party. It demands a rigorous examination and consideration of the entire way one goes about organizing one's social network and world. Who do I value as companions and associates? And why? What is my motivation for whom I invite into my home? Am I overly concerned with social status? Do I seek out or avoid people who are not deemed socially acceptable? Do I expect a return invitation or some other type of reciprocity? If Jesus asked to see my guest list, would I show it willingly and without embarrassment?

Our Neighbor in Need

The second hospitality mandate deals with how to respond when we encounter someone in need. In the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:29-37), Jesus tells the story of a traveler that has been robbed, stripped, beaten and left half dead.

> "And who is my neighbor?" Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half-dead." (Luke 10:29-30)

Probably spoken in the area near Jerusalem, the location of this story heightens its impact. "The road between Jerusalem and Jericho was a very dangerous one for travelers. It winds between limestone cliffs which are marked with numerous caves and travelers from the earliest times have been exposed to attacks of Bedouin robbers."[26]

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[25] For example, according to the 2000 U.S. Census Bureau, 42.3 percent of people with disabilities are unemployed compared with 16.4 of non-disabled people.

[26] Taylor C. Smith, "Parable of the Samaritan," *Review and Expositor* 47 (1950), 437.

Hearers of this story would have known of the danger on this road and been able to visualize the scene.

> Now by change a priest was going down that road and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to place and saw him, passed by the other side. (Luke 10:31-33)

Two socially acceptable people of high status go by the suffering man. A priest and his Levite associate both crossed to the other side of the road as they averted their gaze from the man in need. Why a priest and Levite in this story? Michel Gourgues thinks "The explanation seems quite simple and in some ways completely natural if the social hierarchy of the day is taken into account."[27] One suggested answer is sociological in nature. "The two characters whom the example story of the Good Samaritan first puts on the scene belong to the first two categories of the social hierarchy that dominated post-exilic Judaism."[28] They probably represent the religious leaders of Judaism. One possibility, although there is not scholarly consensus on this theory, is that these leading examples of law-observant people do not aid the stripped and apparently dead man for fear of being defiled.[29] If they were on the way to or from Jerusalem with the purpose of service in the Temple, they would have been concerned about coming into contact with a corpse because it would cause impurity rendering them unclean for a period of twenty-four hours (Lev 21:1-4). Is this an excuse for heartlessly ignoring the suffering of another? In any case, and for whatever reason, they failed to show hospitality to the injured man and left him there to die.

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[27] Michel Gourgues, "The Priest, the Levite and the Samaritan Revisited: A Critical Note on Luke 10: 31-35," *Journal of Biblical Literature* Winter (1998), 710.

[28] Ibid., 713.

[29] Ibid., 709. Along with the author of this article, both R.J. Karris and J.A. Fitzmyer support this interpretation although Luke often critiques scribes, lawyers and Pharisees as examples of those who have a strict and rigorous observance of the law.

> But a Samaritan while traveling came hear; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took are of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, "Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend." (Luke 10:33-35)

Why a Samaritan? Definitely as a dramatic contrast to the two religious leaders. The designation of Samaritan is loaded with meaning. From the region of Samaria, Samaritans and Jews were at odds with each other from centuries of conflicts. The man would have been considered a foreigner, outside of the Covenant, perhaps of questionable character and under some suspicion. He was certainly not the one who would first come to mind as a neighbor. Samaritans are mentioned in three of the Gospels. In Matthew, Jesus tells the disciples to avoid Samaritan villages (Matt 10:5-6). In Luke, a Samaritan village rejects Jesus (Luke 9:52-53). In a more favorable light, a Samaritan is one of the ten lepers cleansed by Jesus (Luke 17:11-17). In John 4: 7-9 Jesus asks a Samaritan woman for a drink of water. She is surprised by his request. "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria? (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans)," but in the following passage, the Samaritans offer Jesus hospitality which he accepts and stays with them for two days (John 4:40). This foreign Samaritan of the parable in question, was "moved with pity" and filled with compassion and treats the injured man in a most kind way. He immediately goes to the man and tends his wounds with oil and wine, considered salve and antiseptic in the ancient world. He then puts the man on his own animal and takes him to an inn, stays with him overnight and gives the innkeeper enough money to care for him for a few months. What ever his own plans were, they were put on hold to help the man who had been robbed and left to die.

This story was told in response to a question in the previous passage posed to Jesus by a lawyer. "Teacher what must I do to inherit eternal life?" (Luke 10:25) When Jesus turns the question back to him he lays out the following formula. "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." (Luke 10:27) When he pushes Jesus a little further by asking "Who is my neighbor?" Jesus does not answer the question directly but instead illustrates what he considers neighborly actions. Our neighbor, it seems, is not necessarily someone who lives next door or even someone we know. And the person who acts in a neighborly way is not necessarily someone of high social status. This is again, another great reversal in the Christian narrative. Gourgues points out that "it was totally unexpected to see a Samaritan – a representative of one of the groups that all agree to exclude from the category - come on the scene and provide the answer to the question "Who is my neighbor?"[30] Jesus explains why this is so.

> "Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" He said, "The one who showed mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise." (Luke 10:36-37)

The showing of mercy defines who acts in a neighborly way. Patrick McCormick calls the "Samaritan a walking definition of the hospitality Jesus demands of his disciples."[31] The Good Samaritan has become the icon of right relation to neighbor. And Jesus' closing line couldn't be clearer. "Go and do likewise."

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[30] Ibid.713.

[31] McCormick, 46.

When We Fail to Offer Hospitality

A startling reminder of what happens when we fail to be hospitable is revealed in the third hospitality mandate in Luke 16:29-37 where "The rich man learns that his own inhospitality has condemned him to stand outside the banquet hall forever."[32] In the story of the rich man and the beggar Lazarus, we are presented with an archetype of self-centeredness - a wealthy, self-involved man who loved to dress extravagantly and enjoy sumptuous feasts each and every day. He ignored the poor beggar Lazarus who languished at his gate. Starving and desperate to eat even the scraps from the rich man's table, Lazarus was covered with sores that the local dogs licked – certainly, a devastating sight to callously ignore. And then both men died. The poor man was taken straight to heaven by the angels and the rich man was sent straight to Hades where he is tormented and in agony. Seeing Abraham and Lazarus in the distance, the formerly rich man begs for mercy. Abraham, however, will have no part of it. "Child, remember that during your lifetime you received your good things, and Lazarus, in a like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are agony. Besides all this, between you and us a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who might want to pass from here to you cannot do so, and no one can cross from there to here" (Luke 16:26). If this harsh retort doesn't impel one to action, it is doubtful anything will.

Conditions for Eternal Life

Another defining mandate for hospitality is Matt 25:31-46 where Jesus explains in great detail exactly who the righteous entering eternal life will be. In this passage, Jesus

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[32] Ibid.

explains to the disciples what is going to happen when the Son of Man comes in his glory on the day of the Last Judgment. All the nations will be gathered and the people will be separated into two groups. The first group will be those who are rewarded with eternal life because they showed compassion by offering food, drink and clothing to the hungry, thirsty and naked, visiting the sick and imprisoned and welcoming the stranger. The second group, those who failed to be compassionate and serve those in need will be told ""You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt 25:41). He strengthens his position by adding that every time the righteous were offering compassionate service, they were doing it for Jesus himself. It is clear there is no room for moral relativism in the description of the Last Judgment. James Keenan says it "is striking in that everyone is surprised by the judgment. The sheep never realized that in feeding the hungry, they were feeding the king. Nor did the goats realize that by not visiting the sick, they were not visiting the Lord."[33] The big shocker, "What ever you did for the least, you did for me," takes both groups by surprise and everyone's motives are laid bare. The message in terms of mandate, however, is again clear. To inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world, you must feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked visit the sick and imprisoned and welcome the stranger.

[33] Keenan, *The Works of Mercy: The Heart of Catholicism*, 3.

HOSPITAITY AS SOTERIOLOGY: "TODAY SALVATION HAS COME TO THIS HOUSE"

> He entered through Jericho and was passing through it. A man was there named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was rich. He was trying to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was short of statue. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see him, because he was going to pass this way. When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today." So he hurried down and was happy to welcome him. All who saw it began to grumble and said, "He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner." Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, "Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much." Then Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost."
>
> Luke 19:1-10

Found only in Luke's Gospel, this is a most encouraging story of hospitality as soteriology. It is the third piece of a trilogy that begs the question of who and how one can be saved. In the first story (Luke 18:18-25), Jesus answers the question of what one must do to inherit eternal life. Besides keeping the commandments, Jesus tells the man, who is named as "a certain ruler" to "Sell all that you own and distribute the money to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven." The man, who is "very rich" was saddened by the very thought of parting with his beloved possessions even for eternal life. Jesus responds with the ever daunting news that it is easier for a huge camel to go through the tiny eye of a needle than it is for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God. So it is easy to see why the rich young man went away sad. The second story, (Luke 18:35-43) is the cure of the bold blind man whose faith saved him. The unnamed man was sitting on the roadside begging. When the crowd told him Jesus was passing by, he shouts to him, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me." The crowd admonishes him

and tells him to be quiet, but he is not deterred, and calls out again, using the familiar "Son of David" and begging for Jesus to have mercy on him. When asked by Jesus, "What do you want me to do for you?" he asked to be able to see again. Impressed by his faith, Jesus restores his sight telling him "his faith has saved him." Following these two possible paths to salvation – through firm faith, and by giving away all you possess to the poor - comes the story of Zacchaeus with a hopeful new twist about the conditions for salvation that "synthesizes dramatically some key themes of discipleship."[34]

Zacchaeus is a favorite of the disability community who claim him as one of their own because he was "short of statue."[35] Certainly his small size would have added to his marginal status along with being the ever maligned tax collector, and the chief one at that. His wealthy financial status helps to round out the picture of a man with some rather unattractive qualities that would have made him "the chief of sinners, bearing responsibility for the dishonesty connected with the activity of all his field workers."[36] However, in spite of his reputation, Zacchaeus emerges as a person who is "spontaneous and impetuous,"[37] humble, enthusiastic and open to conversion. The image of Jesus standing in front of a sycamore tree telling Zacchaeus to "Hurry down, I mean to stay at your house" is humorous and endearing. One can just see the awkward climb down and Zacchaeus' waving his arms as he offers an effusive welcome to Jesus. Again, the

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[34] Jerome Kodell, *The Gospel According to Luke*, Collegeville Bible Commentary (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1983), 91.

[35] Disability rights advocates suggest the terms "short of stature, a little person, or a person with achondroplasia" to refer to people who in the past would have labeled midget or dwarf. There are several non-profit organizations that serve people with disabilities named in his honor such as Zaccheaus 2000 Trust and the Zaccheaus Free Clinic at Gallaudet University.

[36] Kodell, 91.

[37] Ibid.

judgmental naysayers complain about with whom Jesus is keeping company, but Zacchaeus was not to be deterred. He was clearly overwhelmed by the attention and presence of Jesus and while they are still outside, in front of the critical onlookers, Zacchaeus professes his desire to change. Jerome Kodell points out the social transformation that is occurring as "Jesus' love of him has awakened new possibilities of love and service."[38]

Note the tenses in the next part of the story...."half of my possessions, Lord, I **will** give to the poor; and **if** I have defrauded anyone of anything, I **will** pay back four times as much." Scholars give a great deal of attention to the tenses of the Greek verbs that signify "futuristic interpretation and expresses a resolve."[39] He is not talking about something he has already done, nor does he say he has defrauded anyone. He does not beg for mercy or express sorrow. He just promises to act justly in the future. "Standing in the presence of Christ, he solemnly makes over half his great wealth to the poor, and with the other half engages to make reparation to those he has defrauded."[40] And clearly, this pleases and is enough for Jesus who utters the phrase we perhaps all most hope to hear in our lifetime. "Today salvation has come to this house." Today, now, not in the distant future, not in the afterlife, but right now, today! When we hurry down from our perches and open the door when someone needs hospitality, we are converted in the process, and in comes salvation.

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[38] Ibid., 92.

[39] Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, 1st ed., 2 vols. (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1981), 1220. See this article for a discussion on the position of different scholars on the translation of the tense being used in this passage. Most scholars, including Fitzmyer, favor the futuristic interpretation.

[40] Ibid.

Zacchaeus volunteers to give away half of what he has and make restitution if he cheated anyone. Eugene LaVerdiere explains that "The story thus shows how with God it is possible for a rich man to be saved."[41] This seems to be the answer to the question posed in the previous chapter (Luke 18:24-27) when Jesus is asked "Who can be saved?" He has just told the rich man and the crowd some harsh news, "how hard it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God." To their dismay, confusion and probably relief, he adds the cryptic "What is impossible for mortals is possible for God." "What was thought to be humanly impossible is made possible by the presence of Jesus" and by Zaccheaus' willingness to be converted. [42] John Gillman comments that "The Zacchaeus episode is one of Luke's most significant texts on the right use of possessions and hence becomes an example par excellence for rich Christians. Unlike the rich man in the previous chapter, Zacchaeus responds generously and joyfully to Jesus; he demonstrates the fruit of his repentance and receives salvation."[43] The passage closes with the inclusion of Zacchaeus in the community when Jesus says "he is also a son of Abraham," and with the soteriological explanation of his actions, "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost." "What began as a quest by Zacchaeus to see Jesus is transposed at the end into a quest by Jesus to seek out and save."[44] Welcome and repentance save the day for Zacchaeus.

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[41] Eugene LaVerdiere, *Luke*, New Testament Message (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1990), 225.

[42] John Gillman, *Possessions and the Life of Faith: A Reading of Luke-Acts*, Zacchaeus Studies. New Testament (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1991), 91.

[43] Ibid., 89.

[44] Ibid., 90.

There are two types of hospitality offered in this story. First, on the personal level Zacchaeus responds positively to Jesus request for hospitality. Second, on the institutional level, Zacchaeus decides to give half of his wealth to the poor. Both these types of hospitality are desperately needed in our broken world. John Koenig describes the type of social transformation that we see in this passage and in all genuine experiences of hospitality. "All words and acts of welcome that conform to Jesus' ministry both partake God's abundance and disclose it to others. When this welcoming happen, the boundaries of space and time that obscure God's kingdom melt away. Briefly, imperfectly, but also with great power, heaven and earth intersect and true humanity occurs."[45] A realized eschatology, indeed.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE GOSPELS

What conclusions can be drawn from the Scriptures about the role of hospitality in the Christian life? At the risk of reductionism, I suggest the following ten Gospel imperatives.

1. Jesus is **very** serious about hospitality, so much so that our salvation is tied to how hospitable we are. We encounter Jesus in those who suffer and are marginalized. What ever you do for the least, you do for me. To have Jesus as one's guest is to be host to salvation.[46] If you are not generous to the poor, you will not be able to welcome Jesus nor will you dine with the saints at the heavenly banquet. As Nathan Mitchell puts it, "In a nutshell, no one gets into heaven without a letter of recommendation from the poor."[47]

2. We are instructed to keep company with people on the margins. Engage with social outcasts. Remember that Jesus comes in a variety of costume changes.

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[45] Koenig, 45.

[46] LaVerdiere, 225.

[47] Nathan Mitchell, *Meeting Mystery: Liturgy, Worship, Sacraments* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2006), 42.

Lord, when did we see you hungry? When did we see you friendless and alone? When did we see you begging on the street? When did we turn our gaze from your suffering? Let these words haunt you and track you down.

3. When specifically asked for hospitality ("Zacchaeus, hurry and come down for I must stay at your house today") think long and hard before saying no, however inconvenient the request may be. If Zacchaeus had been too tired, too busy, in a bad mood, or too impressed with his own self-importance, he would have effectively given up his salvation.

4. Keep company with those on the margins of society. There will be lots of naysayers and people questioning your intentions, motivations, and with whom you are seen keeping company. All who saw it began to grumble and said, "He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner." If you hear people are saying things about you like "Why does she have those low class people with those old cars parked in front of her house? Why are you friends with him? Don't you know he has a terrible reputation?" you know you are on the right track.

5. If God has blessed you with more than adequate financial resources, remember that rich people can gain salvation if they are converted and generous. "If you have money," Thomas Merton contends, "consider that perhaps the only reason God allowed it to fall in your hands was in order that you might find joy and perfection by giving it all away."[48]

6. Skip the complaining and focus on the guest. This suggestion appears numerous times in the Scriptures. Jesus tells Martha to stop complaining and worrying and to enjoy being with the guest. 1 Peter explains the same thing to the early Christians. "Above all, maintain constant love for one another, for loves covers a multiple of sins. Be hospitable to one another with complaining." There is nothing worse than a grumbling host.

7. Expect to share and give away your resources – half is what is suggested. Remember Zacchaeus: "Salvation happens to the rich tax collector because of his reception of the prophet and the disposition of his possessions. The one who shares generously with the poor can welcome the prophet gladly."[49]

8. Look for nothing in return. This is one of the basic tenets of hospitality praxis. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

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[48] Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation* (Norkfolk, Conn.: New Directions, 1962), 179.

[49] Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, ed. Daniel J. Harrington, Sacra Pagina, vol. 3 (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1991), 286.

9. Strive to create balance between your offering of hospitality on the personal level and on the institutional level. Confront and work to change the "economic, social, religious and political forces that exploit, impoverish and deny sustenance to vast segments of the population,"[50] while at the same time welcoming the poor and the stranger into your daily life.

10. Bottom line....anyone who fails to show or share God's hospitality with others is unlikely to find a place card with their name on it at the banquet in the Kingdom of God.

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF HOSPITALITY IN CHRISTIAN HISTORY

James Keenan claims that "we cannot overestimate the role that hospitality had in the rise of Christianity."[51] In fact, because hospitality is so central to the development, growth and sustaining of the Church, one of the ways the narrative of Christian history can be told is through the hermeneutical lenses of hospitality. In this section, I present a broad historical overview of Christian hospitality since the beginning of Christianity. My intent is to show the major movements in the practices of hospitality and the social and cultural factors that brought about these changes. This is by no means a comprehensive history, just a short outline of the way hospitality has been provided in the Christian context over the course of history. The material is organized chronologically. The time periods used were selected because they coordinate to the significant changes in hospitality patterns. While these periods are somewhat artificial and many of the changes that I refer to happened slowly over long periods of time, this general survey should be a helpful overview.

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[50] Grassi, 59.

[51] Keenan, "Jesuit Hospitality?," 232.

Gathering as Community

"Meeks and Stark along with many other recent scholars direct us to hospitality as one of the key identifiable traits of early Christianity."[52] However, I suggest a different way of considering the role of hospitality in early Christianity. Rather than viewing hospitality as key identifiable trait, I suggest the possibility that Christianity developed within the context of hospitality. That is, if the early Christians – a generally ragtag group of socially disenfranchised people[53] – had not gathered in homes and shared meals at table, told and re-told the stories of Jesus, broken open the bread of life and raised the cup of salvation, welcomed strangers and neophyte traveling Christians, and lived out the message of Jesus by extending hospitality outwards to care for the poor, Christianity might never have taken hold and spread. It was in and through hospitality that the fledgling group became a community. The sharing of hospitality in the new time of the Risen Lord formed Christian identity and transcended social boundaries creating strong bonds among its members. These bonds were so strong they could not be broken by persecution or lack of mission and focus.

The mobility of the Roman society is a key cultural factor in understanding the role of hospitality in the rise of Christianity. Abraham Malherbe remarks, "The Book of Acts presents Paul as establishing churches on the main trade routes of the Empire and having among his first associates and converts people who were, like himself, transients.

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[52] Ibid., 242.

[53] According to Abraham J. Malherbe (*Social Aspects of Early Christianity*, Second Edition, Eugene: Oregon: Wifp and Stock Publishers, 1983) recent studies suggest that at least some of the members of the Christian groups in the first century were an influential minority of well-to-do persons, however, the largest numbers would have come from the lower classes.

Paul's own letters further impress one with the mobility of his co-workers."[54] Because there was significant mobility in Roman society during the first centuries of Christianity, hospitality played an important role as the traveling Christians needed accommodations and welcome and desired to be together. Hospitality was a spontaneous response to the physical and spiritual needs of both the local communities and the traveling Christians. In Acts 16:15, Lydia, a woman from the city of Thyatira, along with others in her household is converted by Paul. She insistently offers hospitality to Paul and his companions. "If you have judged me to the faithful to the Lord, come and stay at my house. And she prevailed upon us." In Acts 18:1-8, we find a newly converted couple, Aquila and his wife Priscilla offering Paul hospitality. "He stayed with them and they worked together, by trade they were tentmakers." Because believers were often a persecuted minority, it was an intense time and practices of hospitality were important in both providing care and sustaining identity. In fact, one way that Christians learned how to be Christian was through the offering and receiving of hospitality.

In the ancient world, the household served as the basis for social, political and religious cohesiveness. The household played two central roles in the development of the hospitality tradition in Christianity. First, a site for welcome for the Christian traveler and included practices of hospitality that included meals and conversation, worship and Eucharist, sleeping accommodations and attendance to the physical needs of travelers. Second, since the early church did not own buildings specifically constructed for worship and its religious activities, the home was a primary meeting place of some of its

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[54] Abraham J. Malherbe, *Social Aspects of Early Christianity*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 95.

members.[55] What began as informal meeting space eventually developed into house churches that were the centers of Christian life and the first location of early institutional practices of Christian hospitality. A church house is referred to specifically in Romans 16:3 when Paul asks for greetings for Prisca and Aquila and "also the Church in their house," and again in 1 Cor 16:19 "The churches of Asia send greetings; Aquila and Prisca, together with the church in their house, greet you warmly in the Lord." A part of the gathering in the many house churches that developed was the care of the community. Francis Schüssler Fiorenza explains the hospitality praxis of the New Testament and early Christian communities. "The communities develop forms of life-praxis as well as liturgical praxis that constitute a community in which charity and mercy are integral to its religious, as well as ethical life. Regular collections of both money and goods, large donations and sporadic collections for specific needs or occasion were all made."[56] These donations were shared with the orphans, widows, sick need and prisoners, and "there was not a needy person among them" (Acts 4:34).

More Christians and Increasing Needs

After the Peace of Constantine in 313 C.E., Christianity slowly transitioned from a persecuted sect to the religion of the empire. A number of social and cultural changes influenced Christian hospitality during this time of transition in the fourth and fifth centuries and each of these social conditions gave rise to different forms of hospitality. There was a dramatic increase in number of Christians with a corresponding increase in

[55] Ibid., 68.

[56] Francis Schüssler-Fiorenza, "The Works of Mercy: Theological Perspectives," in *The Works of Mercy: New Perspectives on Ministry*, ed. Francis A. Eigo (Villanova, Pa.: Villanova University Press, 1992), 36.

need for housing, meals, and general hospitality. The sheer numbers of Christians traveling made seeking accommodations exclusively in homes impossible, and hostels developed to handle the demands of the many traveling Christians. There were also many more poor and vulnerable people in need of care.

As the institutional Church developed, concern and responsibility for the care of orphans, widows, strangers, the sick and poor started to move from the community to a more institutional approach. The works of mercy became organized and centered in the office of the Presider at the Eucharist or the Bishop[57] and removed from person to person outreach as described in the early days of the church (Acts 2:42-27, 4:32-37). The institutional Church became concerned with the matters related to property and goods and the way these were used to care for the poor. For example, the expression "The goods of the church are the goods of the poor" appeared in many local councils and synods toward the end of the early Christian period.[58] At this time, because of the larger number of Christians in need and the intent of the Church to care for the poor, institutional settings began to develop. Christina Pohl explains that "Although some development of institutions of care had begun slightly earlier, the major innovations occurred in the fourth century."[59] This includes the development of the hospital. Francis Schüssler Fiorenza cautions against an anachronistic understanding of the hospital. "The early hospital should not be simply equated with our modern hospital. Often called the 'Houses of God,' they provided hospitality and shelter not only for the ill, but also for the

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[57] Ibid.

[58] Ibid., 37., For example, Clermont 535, Orleans 538 and 541, Paris 614.

[59] Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition*, 43.

poor, pilgrims and travelers."[60] Initially, hospitals were much more diverse institutions than a modern hospital, providing a wide variety of needs to all types of people including orphans, widows, persons with disabilities, invalids, the sick and the poor.

The rise of monasticism created a new category of hospitality in two distinct ways. First, pilgrims looking for a religious experience made their way to monasteries where they were offered welcome, shelter, food and participation in religious life. *The Rule of Benedict*, written by Benedict of Nursia (ca. 480–550) articulates a rule for monastic life that gave (and still continues to give) a central role to hospitality. Founded on Christ's imperative in Matt 25, the Rule states "All guests who present themselves are to be welcomed as Christ, for he himself will say: 'I was a stranger and you welcomed me'" (The Rule of St. Benedict 53:1).[61] Benedict's Rule requires the monastic community to welcome guests as they would welcome Christ and hospitality is personally offered within the boundaries of religious life. "Great care and concern are to be shown in receiving poor people and pilgrims, because in them more particularly Christ is received."[62] It was common to have a hospital as a wing of a monastery where the poor could seek refuge. While the monastery did provide hospitality to different groups of people – visitors, pilgrims, the sick, and the local poor - it was always at arm's length. The personal, face-to face dimension did not take place under these circumstances, and the role of guest and host was clearly defined in the monastic setting.

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[60] Schüssler-Fiorenza, 37-38.

[61] Daniel Homan and Lonni Collins Pratt, *Radical Hospitality: Benedict's Way of Love* (Brewster, Mass.: Paraclete Press, 2002), inside cover.

[62] Ibid.

Even as institutions and monasteries developed and took over the hospitality and care of the large numbers of those in need, the household still remained an important location both as a house church and place where hospitality is offered. However, as direct, personal hospitality in the home gave way to institutional hospitality, conflicts and tension arose. John Chrysostom, the great bishop of Constantinople, offers a strong moral exhortation on this subject.

> Make for yourself a guest chamber in your own house. Set up a bed there, set up a table there and a candlestick. For isn't it absurd, that if soldiers happy to come you have rooms set apart for them, and how much care for them and furnish them with everything, because they protect you from the visible war of this world? Yet strangers have no place where they might abide? Gain a victory over the Church. Do you want to put us to shame? Then do this: Surpass us in generosity. Have a room, to which Christ may come. Say, "This is Christ's space. This building is set apart for Him." Even it is just a basement and tiny. He won't refuse it. Christ goes about "naked and a stranger." It is only a shelter He wants. Give it to him, even if it is not much. Don't be uncompassionate nor inhuman. Don't be so earnest in worldly matters, yet so cold in spiritual.[63]

Regretfully, the glory days of Christian hospitality begin to come to an end at this time. As institutional care spread and Christianity lost it radical edge, the moral imperative for hospitality weakened and its socially transformative power began to be lost. The practice of hospitality went in two directions. First, the household as the site of hospitality diminished and care of the poor was assumed by institutions with clearly delineated roles of guest and host. And even more unfortunate, as the Church grew in influence and wealth, hospitality was used to gain social advantage and to demarcate existing patterns of wealth and power.

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[63] John Chrysostom, Homily 45 on Acts of the Apostles in *And You Welcomed Me: A Sourcebook on Hospitality in Early Christianity* edited by Amy Oden, (Nashville: Abingdon Press: 2001), 162-163.

Institutionalized Hospitality

These unfortunate changes in hospitality patterns were beginning at the end of the fifth century increased and hospitality as a transforming community builder gradually came to an end in about the sixth century. This does not mean, however, that the Church and its members were not concerned with offering hospitality to those in need. The practices of hospitality throughout the medieval period, however, were quite different.

To begin with, the end of house churches as the site of worship changed the face of hospitality significantly and separated the direct connection between worship and hospitality. Liturgical practices became more formal, churches were built for worship, and the role of the clergy was solidified. During this period, the poor were still a moral concern but the responsibility fell to the official Church under the auspices of the Bishop. Institutions supported by the Church developed to meet the needs of the poor. Over time, these institutions became highly specialized. In the fifteenth century, Anthony of Fiorenza wrote a treatise on the works of mercy. "He distinguishes among the *symdochium* – which gave lodging to the poor and pilgrims, the *procotrophium* – which gave food, the *gerontocomium* – which was open to the elderly, the *orphanotropium*, the orphanage, and the *brephotropium* – which was established to nourish infants."[64] The provision of this type of hospitality was conducted at arms length, either in specialized institutions, or perhaps by as giving small stipends to the poor who would stand outside the gate at the monastery. An unfortunate consequence of this change was that it effectively ensured a lack of social interaction among different classes of people giving no opportunity for social transformation. In her essay on the significance of marginality in the practice of hospitality, Christina Pohl explains an unfortunate side effect of the

[64] Schüssler-Fiorenza, 38.

provision of hospitality by institutions. "One of the long-term consequences of specialized institutions, developed to more effectively meet human needs, was that social relations were flattened out to one dimension – that of caregiver and recipient, or professional and client. These roles were intentional not interchangeable, and the bonds among the people were deliberately very limited."[65]

Changes in the Church also impacted hospitality. The rise of clericalism helped to create wealthy monastic communities and great households belonging to bishops where lavish hospitality was offered to persons of high social status. Gone was the egalitarian vision of unity in Christ so clearly proclaimed by Paul when he wrote to the Galatians saying "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female, for all of you are one in Christ" (Gal 3:28). Hospitality on a grand scale to impress important people continued to escalate to a level of great excess, and began to be used to delineate and enforce social stratification rather than blur it. Christina Pohl describes this situation of the late middle ages: "Households of bishops, as well as those lay aristocrats, were concerned with displays of power often evidenced through the size and the magnificence of their entertainment. Such hospitality involved an elaborate deference to rank and power."[66] This deference of power was seen in ways such as those of lower status being received at a different table and fed different and coarser food with distinctions in things as pedestrian as type of bread served and table linens used.

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[65] Pohl, "Hospitality from the Edges: The Significance of Marginality in the Practice of Welcome," 130.

[66] Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition*, 50.

Great social dislocation marked the sixteenth century as the feudal and manorial systems collapsed. Rural communities of support declined with the spread of urbanization and a series of bad harvests created terrible food shortages. Christina Pohl describes another problem that occurred. Vagrancy, that is large numbers of poor and unattached men without any social network of support, became a significant problem. Know as "vagabonds" or "masterless men,"[67] they wandered the countryside in need of assistance. These vagabonds were viewed as a nuisance and a problem and the response to their needs was less than generous. Plagues, famines, and malnutrition created massive numbers of suffering people in need of hospitality but unable to offer it. Migration to the cities created huge numbers of poor people in the cities and "pauperism became a fact of urban life."[68] Various cities, who had now assumed responsibility for the care of the poor, took measures to deal with the problem. "Amiens decided to expel newly immigrated beggars, Paris limited the access of poor foreigners, and Ypes, a city in Flanders, outlawed begging."[69] Other cities followed and eventually Emperor Charles V passed an ordinance outlawing begging unless one had a certificate from the pastor testifying to one's status a poor person. The issue of poverty became a major social, political and theological issue and the morality of the prohibition of begging was a hotly debated topic. The city of Ypres went so far as to petition the theological faculty of the Sorbonne for an official theological evaluation, resulting in a complex formula for how the problem of the poor beggars should be addressed.[70] The end result was municipal

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[67] Ibid., 48.

[68] Schüssler-Fiorenza, 46.

[69] Ibid.

[70] Ibid., 48.

governments stepping in and organizing forms of assistance for those deemed truly poor. The role of the Church changed and it no longer assumed responsibility for care of the poor. Over time, even the operation of the institutions providing care to the poor that were started by the Church, including hospitals and orphanages, were turned over to the municipal governments to run. This created further distance from the ideals of early Christian hospitality as the care for the sick and poor literally became someone else's problem and responsibility. An outcome of this change was a very different attitude about poverty. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, poverty was seen as an evil and begging not as virtue but as vice. This thinking laid the groundwork for two major changes. First, the Renaissance and Enlightenment critique of religion and, second, the development of social policy.

The Protestant Retrieval of Hospitality

Among their many critiques of the Roman Church, the Reformers - Luther, Calvin and others - bemoaned the loss of the practice of hospitality. Calvin expressed anxiety about the loss of hospitality as a normative practice. Referring to the practice of hospitality he states: "This office of humanity has...nearly ceased to be properly observed among men."[71] Seeking a new direction, "sixteenth century Protestant reformers redefined the practice of hospitality. They offered unrelenting critiques of the extravagance, indulgence and waste associated with late medieval hospitality."[72] Attempting to return to the biblical and early church practices, they placed emphasis on

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[71] John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews,* (Grand Rapids, Michigan:Eerdmans, 1948), 340. Quoted in Bretherton, *Hospitality as Holiness*, 141.

[72] Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition*, 52.

care for the poor and for exiles, and the role and responsibility of civic leaders and Christian families were to play in the provision of this care. Their attempts were thought of as a valued expression of human care, not specifically hospitality, and were somewhat successful although "they did not recover from the ancient sources an appreciation for the church as important location for hospitality, instead they identified hospitality with the civic and the domestic spheres."[73] This has far reaching consequences as hospitality became detached from its Christian roots and became firmly located in the secular world.

John Wesley and the eighteenth century English Methodists attempted to recreate early church and patristic models for hospitality by holding meetings in homes and recovering the practice of the shared meal and table fellowship. Wesley encouraged his followers to visit the sick and help the poor, and the Methodists created many small scale homes and institutions to care for the sick, the poor and others in need such as widows. Wesley insisted on people of all different social backgrounds mixing with each other, again attempting to return to roots of early Christianity. However, he and his followers never actually called their work "hospitality" so it never became part of the historical tradition and later generations in their traditions did not understand the importance of hospitality in their early roots.[74]

"For many parts of the Western Church, hospitality got lost in the eighteenth century. People were having trouble finding it for several centuries before then, but it disappeared as a significant moral practice in the 1700s."[75] By the nineteenth century,

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[73] Ibid.

[74] Ibid., pages 54 – 57 for a in-depth discussion on John Wesley and the early Methodist tradition.

[75] Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition*, 36.

benevolent organizations were rapidly developing in America. Many of these had an association with Christian congregations but they were not the work of the congregation directly. Therefore, there was little or no opportunity for social transformation or community bonding – hospitality became, by and large, an institutional reality.

The Church as Social Critic

In the late nineteenth century, with the rise of the middle class, a new consciousness developed that acknowledged the existence of problems such as poverty, disease, literacy and the rights of workers. This awareness grew into the concepts of what we now call "social issues," and eventually became a significant moral category. Many mark *Rerun Novarum*, a papal encyclical issued by Pope Leo XIII on May 15, 1891, as the Church's entrance into social issues and the recognition of the relationship between spiritual and social matters. Naming poverty as a scandal, calling the religious community to play a role in the resolution of these problems, and laying the foundation for the social justice movement that would follow in the next century, Pope Leo XIII addressed the issue of classes and called for a just wage for workers This is the first document in which the principle of subsidiary is introduced that calls for institutions and forms of society to be at the service of the human person and work toward justice in all social conditions. Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, in writing about the history of the works of mercy, points out that John Paul II's "*Centesimus Annus* critically examined poverty, exploitation, and the negative effects of modern economic life. Socialism and capitalism, a market economy as well as a completely planned economy, have come under scrutiny

in terms of their effects on human dignity and human nature."[76] While this new social consciousness made a needed and very worthwhile contribution to the moral life of Christians, its focus on structures, class issues and rights continued the trend toward delegating the practice of hospitality to institutions. This can be tied to the proliferation of organizations focused on the reduction of social problems such as poverty, homelessness, controllable and treatable diseases, and the organizations and institutions to support them such as orphanages and sanatoriums. By the end of the nineteenth century, the confrontation and elimination of social evils such as poverty, hunger and homelessness became a major focus of activity – all on the institutional level. Person-to-person hospitality leading to social transformation, as it was practiced in early Christianity, had disappeared. Social morality and institutions to attend to social morality now take its place.

The Hospitality Industry in the Modern Period

Hospitality becomes a business in the contemporary period along two tracks. On the for-profit side, the "hospitality industry" develops into a booming consumer driven market, catering to the needs of business travelers and vacationers who seek nice accommodations, better than home-cooked meals, comfort and sometimes entertainment. Hundreds of universities offer studies in the hospitality field – the prestigious Ivy League Cornell University even offers a Ph.D. in hospitality. Names like Hilton, Marriott and Ritz are synonymous with the hospitality industry for their commitment to customer service.

[76] Schüssler-Fiorenza, 41.

The home has become a site where iconic figures such as Martha Stewart try to forge a culture of graciousness through creating attractive homes and matching lifestyles where entertaining for good times and social advancement dominates. On the not-for-profit side, care and provision for the poor, the sick, and the vulnerable are almost exclusively handled by organizations staffed with professionals providing a service. The Association for Retarded Citizens (ARC) and United Cerebral Palsy (UCP) with organizations in every state under a national umbrella organization oversee services for people with mental retardation and cerebral palsy. Virtually every major city has multiple organizations to deal with the problem of homelessness and provide shelters and services to homeless people. The Sanctuary, an outstanding organization in the New York area, provides service to battered women. Food for the Poor is one among many organizations that provide food to those who are hungry. Children's Home Services provides a full continuum of services to children who have been abandoned by their parents. Virtually every disease has organizations to support research, treatment and service – the American Cancer Society, the Diabetes Foundation, the Alzheimer Project, and the HIV/AIDS Initiative, just to name a few. These organizations are often highly specialized each with its own culture and values, and, unless government funded, most attempt to raise money to support their work. Very often, the goals, needs and survival of the organization take a priority over the people served. In many ways, financially contributing to these organizations becomes the distant link between those wanting to offer hospitality and those in need of assistance.[77] Both the for-profit and not-for profit

[77] This is not to insinuate that Christians should not give generously to organizations that provide services to the poor, the vulnerable and the disenfranchised. Donations are a legitimate way to share one's resources, however, a balance between the personal and the institutional is desired for full participation.

tracks alike are arranged to provide enough distance between the donors and receivers to make sure most everyone is at least relatively unaffected by encounter. In the non-profit service world, the closest most people come to the people that are offering financial support is by looking through a brochure or watching a video. Rarely do the contributors come into contact with those they are contributing to. Attending a fundraising dinner is one thing – visiting the homeless shelter is another. Most of the time, it is professional staff that handles the provision of services. In both the for-profit and not-for-profit world, issues such as maintaining privacy and keeping boundaries are of central importance.

Social factors that support these contemporary hospitality tracks are the loss of community as a day-to-day reality and an organizing concept, and the privatization of the household. Many of the households of today are either guarded refuges from the world or empty with no one home much of the time. Millions of "latch-key kids" don't even find hospitality in their own homes.[78] Urbanization and the growth of cities, industrialization, and the technology revolution give priority to "progress" over relationships. The cult of the individual that has taken hold in contemporary culture has a decided anti-hospitality bent. In *Habits of the Heart*, the writers claim that "individualism lies at the very core of American culture. We believe in the dignity, indeed the sacredness of the individual. Anything that would violate our right to think for ourselves, judge for ourselves, make our own decisions, live our lives as we see fit, is not

[78] This is by no means a critique of the parents who are forced to leave their children unattended as they are left with no alternative but to work to support the family. It is rather directed at a social system that does not value children and does not pay a living wage enabling working parents to afford acceptable child care.

only morally wrong, it is sacrilegious."[79] The self-sacrificing aspect of hospitality doesn't resonate with individualism. John Kavanaugh, S.J. says our culture has "a powerful undertow towards depersonalization."[80] He names contemporary culture as "capitalistic, consumeristic, individualistic."[81] In spite of the many achievements of our time in areas such as medicine, science and productivity, Kavanaugh believes that our culture "erodes our personal life" and that "we are taught that our worth is largely external: what we own or earn, what we produce, how we look and how we perform."[82] He goes on to say that these pressures overwhelm us and consume us leaving us little time for each other, even those closest to us. This sad and at least partially accurate assessment of the goals and pace of contemporary life does not bode well for the hands on, reward-less practices of hospitality. A fuller consideration of the ramifications of the post-modern situation on a theology and ministry of hospitality will be taken up in Chapter Five. Suffice to say that the role and practice of hospitality as outlined in the gospels is out of sync with the contemporary culture.

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[79] Robert N. Bellah and others, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*, Second Edition, (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1996), 143.

[80] John Kavanaugh, "A Personalist Lent," *America* February 18, 2007, 8.

[81] Ibid.

[82] Ibid.

CHAPTER 4

HOSPITALITY IN THE CONTEXT OF THE CHRISTIAN TRADITION: CONVERSION, EUCHRIST, AND THE WORKS OF MERCY

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I continue to reflect systematically on hospitality within the Christian tradition and expand the discussion from the previous chapter by considering the relationship between and location of hospitality and three of the primary "texts' of Christianity: conversion, Eucharist, and the works of mercy. Each of these aspects of the tradition allows a different entrance point into the way that hospitality is manifest in the tradition. The topics considered in this chapter are a piece of what Browning calls, "the inner core to practical reason."[1] This "inner core" can be understood as the foundational reality of the faith of the community. These topics are a critical piece of the narrative of God's vision for redemption of the world, in Christ, through the Spirit. This inner core "animates and informs, and provides the ontological context for practical reason."[2] Again, an effort will be made to relate these areas of the tradition to the claims of this thesis. Because of the numerous perspectives that can be explored on all three of these topics, the focus and scope of inquiry will be necessarily and intentionally limited as indicated in the introduction to each topic. The first topic addressed is conversion from several perspectives followed by the Eucharist. The chapter ends with a conclusion that integrates the demands of conversion and Eucharist with the works of mercy.

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[1] Browning, 11.

[2] Ibid.

CONVERSION AND HOSPITALITY

In this section, I examine the relationship between hospitality and conversion from several perspectives. I begin with a short definition of conversion and a look at the characteristics that both hospitality and conversion share in common. I then consider hospitality and conversion in light of two of my initial claims and from coordinating perspectives that show how the free and consistent offer of hospitality is a sign of mature conversion, and equally, how the gift of hospitality has the power to effect conversion. Finally, I examine the role of hospitality in the conversion process within a contemporary model of conversion.

The Call to Conversion

A central theme of Jesus' teaching was to challenge to his followers with a forceful and direct call to conversion. "The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand, repent and believe the good news." (Mk1:15) The human response to this call to conversion involves a fundamental change of direction, oriented towards God and away from sin. In the New Testament, the Greek words for conversion or repentance are *metanoia* (largely in the Synoptics and in the Book of Revelation) and *epistrophē* (in Acts, the Pauline Epistles and 1 Peter). Although similar in meaning, the two words have subtly different meanings. *Metanoia* describe the processes behind the thinking and willing that direct an action, and *epistrophē* describes the visible characteristics of the action.[3] Conversion, then, involves both how we think and how we act. Richard Fragomeni describes conversion as a two phased turning. First is *metanoia* or

[3] James L. Walter, "Conversion," in *The New Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Joseph A. Komonchak, Mary Collins, and Dermot A. Lane (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1987), 233.

repentance, a turning away from alienation and sin. Second it is *epistrophē* or enlightment, a turning toward the living God.[4] The journey of religious conversion and the related sacraments of initiation – Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation – lay out a normative blueprint for how a life is to be lived in the Christian community. Speaking of the Christian formation process, Kathy Brown claims, "If discipleship is the goal, conversion is the means for coming to live in Christ, for Christ and as Christ in the world."[56] I argue that giving and receiving hospitality are the building blocks of Christian living, and that the maturity and authenticity of our conversion can be gauged by how hospitable we are. Learning to live in Christ, for Christ, and as Christ in the world necessarily entails learning how to create places of hospitality where respect, acceptance, openness and trust remind all that the Reign of God is at hand.

The Shared Dynamics of Hospitality and Conversion

To better understand the dynamics of conversion in relation to hospitality, it is interesting to look at the characteristics they share in common. To begin with, both are 'corporate' and 'personal' at the same time. In terms of the "corporate," both conversion and hospitality take place in the context and confines of the Church and are essential for building up the Body of Christ. Without conversion, welcome and inclusion there would be no Church. In terms of the "personal," both conversion and hospitality have a fundamentally personal dimension as they intimately involve the actions of our life, our

[4] Richard Fragomeni, "Conversion," in *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, ed. Michael Downey (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1993), 231.

[5] Kathy Brown, "Essential Elements for Pastoral Formation for Initiation," Liturgical Ministry 8 (Spring 1999): 2.

moral behaviors, and our journey towards salvation. No where is our free will exercised more than when we choose conversion as a way of life, and accept the demands of extending ourselves through hospitality to our brothers and sisters.

Amy Oden likens hospitality to conversion in the following way. "For those who participate in hospitality, a 'de-centering of perspective' occurs."[7] This de-centering is essentially a shift in perspective where our own subjectivity does not reign supreme. This experience can create somewhat of a shock and give a clear focus to exactly how much we are in need of conversion. Oden goes on to point out, "This de-centering and reframing that accompanies hospitality is the very movement the New Testament calls *metanoia*, or turning, usually translated 'repentance.'"[8] This is an oft-repeated experience in the process of hospitality – we are converted by those we serve. Conversion, like hospitality, is a complex phenomenon that transforms the entire human person.[9]

The Transformative Character of Hospitality and Conversion

Both conversion and hospitality have a transformative character and forge Christian identity. As one journeys the path of conversion and experiences God's profound love and mercy, Christian identity is formed. As one participates in the sacramental life of the Church, Christian identity is developed. As we learn to be Christ to one another our Christian identity is strengthened. The connection between divine hospitality and human hospitality cannot be separated. This connection first begins with an experience God's hospitality to us and an intuition of the radical possibilities of what it means to live for

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[7] Oden, ed., 293.

[8] Ibid., 15.

[9] Fragomeni, 235.

God, in Christ, through the Spirit. Often early in our conversion process, we are bowled over by God's generous hospitality to humanity and to us personally. Conversion, however, does not truly take hold until it moves in the other direction and we come to understand the absolute necessity of hospitable outreach. Conversion is manifest when divine hospitality becomes human hospitality.

Conversion and Hospitality: Two Perspectives

The process of conversion relates directly to two of the organizational claims in this thesis-project as laid out in Chapter One. First, that hospitality is a moral practice, and second, that hospitality has potential to be socially transformative for both the giver and the receiver. These two claims point to the way hospitality functions in two distinct ways. First, when hospitality is understood as an essential moral practice, embraced and carried out generously, it is a sign of a mature conversion. "In the moral life of individuals and the community we can speak of the gradual but fundamental withdrawal from serving our own needs first and the turning the love and service of others."[10] This gradual moral conversion away from self-concern and towards the concern for others leads to another way that hospitality functions in the conversion process. That is, when it is freely and gratuitously offered, the reception of hospitality effects a powerful experience of conversion. Both of these perspectives will now be addressed.

[10] Walter, 235.

Hospitality as Sign of Mature Conversion

A commitment to the process of conversion is incriminating. The best case scenario for the on-going process of Christian conversion is that it is a life-long project, slow going, with a few false starts and some moderate ups and downs along the way. That model is for the lucky few. For most of us, the process of Christian conversion is mostly hard going, with many difficult periods, even major disasters. Most that make even moderate progress in the spiritual life do so with the help of particular friends who guide and support them at every turn, and a larger community that provides a context that is both a safety net and a reminder of the responsibilities that the Christian life demands. Upon commencement of the Christian journey, in any serious fashion, one can never quite rest easy again. James Walters explains that, "Conversion must be viewed developmentally, as a constant striving for holiness that is assisted and sustained by others within a larger faith community. From this perspective then, all conversion is gradual, if not arduous, turning away and withdrawal from sin and selfishness and the turning towards God who is the source of all goodness."[11]

Learning to put oneself aside to offer hospitality is a critical part of the process of conversion, for it is through this that we learn not to live for ourselves but for others. As noted earlier, Christine Pohl claims that "hospitality is not optional for Christians, nor is it limited to those who are specially gifted for it."[12] While there are individuals who are gifted with the particular charism of hospitality, no Christian person is exempt from welcoming the stranger, caring for the poor, or seeing and responding to the suffering or

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[11] Ibid., 234.

[12] Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition*, 31.

vulnerability in their neighbor's life. The continued practice of gracious hospitality is a sign of a mature and integrated conversion. "Conversion requires a response on the part of humanity – a confession of sinfulness, an openness to receive God's mercy and forgiveness in faith and a joyful desire to love God and neighbor in word and action."[13] When humans respond with their full being, they begin to have "new eyes" that truly see the suffering of others, and a "new heart" to impels to action at the corporate and personal levels.

At the corporate level, the liberation theology movement and the related praxis of social justice action are among the great theological and pastoral developments of the twentieth century. These movements give a voice to people that have been oppressed, and calls the Christian community to actual involvement in their struggles for justice. Liberation theologies are generally developed in two steps. The first step is a description of the human situation being addressed and the unmasking of political ideologies and structures that are oppressive. Step two presents theological teaching in response to the human situation described in step one. This is done by interpreting Christian texts in social terms, by maintaining that the "option for the poor" should be the foundation and intentional basis of the whole church, and by stressing participation in social action for the liberation of the poor and oppressed.[14] If the work of the liberation theology and social justice movement is the response at the corporate level, then the work of hospitality is the response at the personal level. In other words, the corporate side demands we stand up and change structures that oppress, and the personal side demands

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[13] Walter, 233.

[14] Jennie Weiss Block, *Copious Hosting: A Theology of Access for People with Disabilities* (New York: Continuum, 2002). See pages 93-98 for an extended discussion of this topic.

we sit down with and make a place for the oppressed in our own lives. It seems that often the personal level is subordinated to the corporate level creating an unfortunate imbalance. The placing of the corporate responsibility over and above personal responsibility, or vice-versa, is yet another unfortunate example of the problems created by hierarchical dualism.

The Power of Hospitality to Convert

Stories often express truth in a clearer and more explicit way than theory, fact finding or conscious reflection can. The power of hospitality to effect conversion is beautifully told by a story that takes place early in Act One of *Les Misérables*,[15] the epic musical based on Victor Hugo's nineteenth century novel set in France during the Revolution. In the first scene, Hugo's central character, Jean Valjean, recently released from ten years in prison for the crime of stealing bread to feed his family, is staying the night with the local Bishop. An embittered and disillusioned Valjean takes advantage of the Bishop's hospitality and welcome, steals some valuable silver pieces and sneaks out in the dark of night. He is brought back by the police who awaken the Bishop and confront him with Valjean and the stolen silver.

> CONSTABLE:
> *Tell his Reverence your story; let us see if he is impressed*
> *You were lodging here last night; you were the honest Bishop's guest.*
> *And then, out of Christian goodness, when he learned about your plight*
> *You maintained he made a present of this silver*
>
> BISHOP:
> *That is right, but my friend you left so early*
> *Surely something slipped your mind*

[15] "Les Misérables," Book by Claude-Michel Schönberg and Alain Boubilil, Based on the novel by Victor Hugo, Music by Claude-Michel Schönberg, Lyrics by Herbert Kretzmer, 1987: available from http:www.geocities.com/quotequeen81/songs/lesmis.html?200727; accessed 2/27/2007.

(The Bishop gives Valjean two silver candlesticks)

You forgot I gave you these also, would you leave the best behind?
So, Messieurs, you may release him, for this man has spoken true
I commend you for your duty, and God's blessings go with you.

In an extraordinary act of hospitality and charity, the Bishop not only covers for Valjean's lie and theft, but gives him his most valuable silver candlesticks as well. Valjean is overwhelmed and does not know what to make of this holy gesture. He is pulled out of darkness, hate and sin by gracious hospitality.

VALJEAN:
Yet why did I allow that man, to touch my soul and teach me love?
He treated me like any other,
He gave me his trust, he called me brother,
My life he claims for God above, can such things be?
For I had come to hate the world, this world that always hated me

I am reaching, but I fall, and the night is closing in
And I stare into the void, to the whirlpool of my sin
I'll escape now from the world, from the world of Jean Valjean
Jean Valjean is nothing now, another story must begin

At the moment the charitable Bishop gives Valjean the candlesticks, his life takes a fundamental change of direction, oriented toward God, and away from sin. In other words, he has a powerful experience of conversion that sets him on a new course in life. He is given the gift of a "new heart" and "new eyes" and is changed from that day forward. The Bishop acknowledges the power of hospitality to convert when he tells Valjean:

But remember this, my brother; see in this some higher plan
You must use this precious silver, to become an honest man
By the witness of the martyrs, by the Passion and the Blood
God has raised you out of darkness, I have bought your soul for God!

Speaking of his conversion experience, Valjean later acknowledges, "He gave me hope when hope was gone, he gave me strength to carry on." Valjean treasures the

candlesticks for the rest of his life as a symbol of the gift of his transformation. His conversion takes hold of him; he goes forward to live a life of integrity, service and gratitude. There is, however, a sense of realism in the plot, for Valjean's conversion was tested on several occasions. At one point, he almost steals again but remembers the Bishop's hospitality and turns away from sin.

In the last scene, as Valjean lies dying, "the lights of the candles illuminated him. His white face looked up to heaven, he allowed Cosette and Marius to cover his hands with kisses. He was dead. The night was starless and extremely dark. No doubt, in the gloom, some immense angel stood erect with wings outspread, awaiting that soul."[16] Valjean's conversion journey ends as on his deathbed as he dies in peace. The dark, starless night contrasts to glowing light from the silver candlesticks, the symbol of conversion. We are struck by how the Bishop was an "immense angel" to Valjean. The moral of this story is clear. Never underestimate the power of one person or one gesture of hospitality to change course of events of a person's life.

A Contemporary Model of Conversion

Where does hospitality fit into the process of conversion? To answer this question, it is useful to look, in a systematic way, at a contemporary model of conversion. Bernard Lonergan, S.J., developed a model for interpreting the process of conversion that is helpful in the contemporary context. "Lonergan's work sets up explanatory categories of human operations of consciousness. From within this context he explains conversion as a set of judgments and decisions that move the human person from an established

[16] Victor Hugo, *Les Miserables*, trans. Lascelles Wraxall, vol. V (New York: The Heritage Press, 1938), 287-288.

horizon into a new horizon of knowing, valuing, and acting." [17] Building on Lonergan's seminal work on conversion, systematic theologian Donald Gelpi, S.J. advances a model of conversion that is relevant to the work of this thesis-project in several ways. First, in Chapter One, I made the point that most events of Christian hospitality will be a mixture of religious and secular, and that while the motivation for Christian hospitality is the Gospel, the context where hospitality takes place is likely to be outside of the *ecclesia* and immersed in the secular world. The three case studies used in this thesis serve as examples of how this occurs as does Gelpi's model which depends heavily on secular disciplines including social theory, psychology, and the behavioral and social sciences. Gelpi names five distinct forms of conversion distinguishing between the first four forms which he refers to as "personal" conversion, and the fifth form, which he names as "religious conversion." Gelpi acknowledges that the first four forms of conversion – affective, intellectual, moral and socio-political - can and do take place outside of the religious realm explaining that "one need not have undergone religious conversion in order to cultivate intellectual, emotional, moral or sociopolitical responsibility, and humanists devoid of any overt religious commitment can live lives of enormous moral and sociopolitical responsibility in active dedication to the search for a just and humane society."[18] We all know many "virtuous pagans" who set a high standard and in their work for justice and service to others.

Second, Gelpi's model is behaviorally stated, that is tied to action, just as hospitality is tied to action. Generally speaking, these five forms address different areas

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[17] Fragomeni, 234.

[18] Donald L. Gelpi, *Committed Worship: A Sacramental Theology for Converting Christians*, 2 vols., vol. 1 (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1993).

of human development with the one constant being that "every form of conversion shares the similar characteristic where the convert turns from irresponsible to responsible behavior in some identifiable realm of human experience."[19] Each of these forms of conversion involves a decision on the part of the individual and addresses the journey towards personal integration and maturity. Gelpi's theology of conversion distinguishes initial from on-going conversion noting that these different forms of conversion occur in no particular order and influence, inspire, interact and engage each other in a complex and dynamic manner. Gelphi describes the ways in which of each form of conversion measure outcomes and adhere to normative standards. For example:

- Affective converts seek to cultivate a healthy emotional life.
- Intellectual converts submit to sound principles of logic and to sound methodological, artistic or literary procedures.
- Moral converts apply prudential norms to interpersonal interaction and collaboration.
- Socio-political conversion extends moral concern to questions of policy and of institutional reform.
- Religious conversion judges conduct in the light of the demands of divine revelation.[20]

Where does the practice of hospitality fit into Gelpi's model of conversion? The beginning answer is in the category of moral conversion as hospitality is a moral practice in the Christian life. However, hospitality spans across all five forms of conversion in different ways. If the virtue of compassion, and the ability to put one's self aside to attend to the needs of another is central to the "healthy emotionally life" Gelpi names as outcome of affective conversion, then clearly affective conversion must precede the practice of Christian hospitality. He suggests "Religious conversion mediates between

[19] Ibid., 16.

[20] Ibid., 21.

affective and moral conversion."[21] The link between religious conversion and affective moral conversion makes sense in terms of Christian hospitality for the integration of these two forms of conversion are essential for the practice of authentic hospitality to flourish. Perhaps the scope of Gelpi's thinking did not extend to ministry, but he never makes the link between conversion, ministry and service which always follows authentic conversion.[22]

While Gelpi's model is strong about personal responsibility for one's actions, and clear about normative standards that describe what those actions should be, his model is mostly devoid of reference to the complex and personal nature of socially transformative relationships which is one of the basic tenets of hospitality. He makes the distinction between what he calls "personal vs. public morality"[23] and indicates that "personal moral conversion deals with human interpersonal relationships while the socio-political deals with the reform of large, impersonal situations."[24] He argues that "the moral questions that confront the socio-political convert transcend in their complexity those with which the personal convert deals."[25] Gelpi takes a dualistic approach by placing socio-political conversion over and above personal moral conversion. The separation of the personal and socio-political is artificial at best and dangerous at worst. It is yet another example of a form of hierarchical dualism. It is dangerous because it can results in a

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[21] Ibid., 40.

[22] In *The Sacraments of Ongoing Conversion, Volume II*, Gelphi covers the vocational sacraments of marriage and ordained ministry, but does not address the role of the professional minister as a vocation, or the call to serve the community that is a part of every Christian life.

[23] Gelpi, 39.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Ibid., 40.

compartmentalized view of our relationship to individuals and institutions and does not represent an integrated understanding of morality, and can lead to a fractured life.

Gelpi suggests that justice is much more likely to be miscarried in "large, impersonal institutions" because of their anonymous nature.[26] This reasoning is somewhat simplistic for several reasons. First, not all institutions in need of reform are large, impersonal and anonymous. The institutions that we are often called to challenge are the ones with which we are most familiar, and they can be small and quite personal – our own religious congregations, universities, schools, and the not-for-profits organizations with which we are closely associated are not exempt from injustice practices. Sometimes we pay a big price when we challenge the institutions to which we are personally related. Additionally, the history of Christian hospitality points out that since about the fifth century, many of the practices of hospitality have been carried out by institutions, and in modern times, the most common location for the practice of hospitality are institutional settings that are likely to be specialized and run by professionals. Surely then, the role of Christian hospitality must extend to socio-political conversion for it would be naïve to think that only huge, multi-national, capitalist organizations are in need of conversion. Abuses of this nature are easy to document in both secular and religious settings.[27] The organizations that have taken on the role of

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[26]Ibid.

[27] In my years of disability work, I encountered inhumane institutions where people with disabilities were living in overcrowded wards, sitting on the floor with glazed stares, laying naked and unkempt in bed in their own urine and feces, or wandering unsupervised. Neglect, abuse, semi-starvation, overmedication, and no health and dental care were an institutional way of life. The Willowbrook Institution in New York is a famous example of this situation. After an expose of this and other similar situations, a series of class action lawsuits began the deinstitutionalization movement closing hundreds of institutions around the country. See my book *Copious Hosting: A Theology of Access for People with Disabilities* (New York and London: Continuum Publishing, 2002), and *Christmas in Purgatory: A*

provision of certain types of hospitality – hospitals, hospices, shelters for the homeless and abused women and their children, group homes for people with disabilities, nursing homes for the elderly, legal aid centers, even parishes – need to be subject to at least the same scrutiny as a big business and political systems.

Gelpi's claim that "in interpersonal relationships we can assign responsibility for decisions with relative ease"[28] seems a bit naïve. The assigning of responsibility might be apparent, but addressing injustice in our own sphere and within personal relationships rarely comes with "relative ease." Often the evidence of our moral failings and setbacks in the conversion process are in the area of interpersonal relationship, and surely, every time we turn our back on the lonely other in need of compassionate hospitality, we experience a setback in our conversion process.

Gelpi's work locates conversion within the sacramental life of the Church. Religious conversion moves an individual from "unbelief to belief, from sin to the attempt with the help of divine grace, to a live a sinless life, from exclusion from sacramental communion with the community of Jesus Christ to full sacramental communion with its members."[29] Full sacramental communion with the members of the community of Jesus Christ cannot be realized without the practice of hospitality occurring in both the personal/moral and corporate/sociopolitical realms. Anything less creates an uncomfortable dissidence and stifles the Spirit's movement toward authentic

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Photographic Essay on Mental Retardation by Burton Blatt and Fred Kaplan (Syracuse: Center on Human Policy, 1974) for a more information on this topic.

[28] Gelpi, 40.

[29] Ibid., 17.

conversion. I now turn to the sacramental life of the Church to consider the connection between the Eucharist and hospitality.

THE EUCHARIST: RITUAL HOSPITALITY

> While they were eating, he took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave him to them, and said, "Take; this is my body." Then he took a cup, and after giving them thanks he gave it to me them, and all of them drank it. He said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many."
>
> Mark 14:22-24

In this section, I explore the ways in hospitality intersects with the center of the Christian faith, the Eucharist. I begin with an overview of contemporary Eucharistic theology as it is germane to hospitality. I then turn to a consideration of the metaphor and activity of the "shared meal" in both the Eucharist and hospitality. I include a personal reflection on the experience of the great Jewish shared meal, the Passover Seder. A discussion on the ways the community sometimes fails to extend the Eucharist into hospitality is presented. The chapter closes with a summary on the works of mercy as a way to translate conversion and the Eucharistic celebration into action.

I have demonstrated the ways the theme of hospitality runs through the Scriptures and the process of conversion, and I now turn to the theme of hospitality in the Eucharist. In Chapter One, I assert the claim that hospitality is deeply tied to Christian identity and is a central theme woven through all aspects of the tradition. The liturgical celebration in which Christians celebrate the Eucharist is a special locus Christian formation. *Sacrosanctum Concilium* calls it "the summit toward which the activity of the church is

directed, it is also the source from which all its power flows."[30] The Eucharist is the grounding of all Christian hospitality for it continually demonstrates God's salvific gift to humanity. Joe Grassi explains, "The Eucharist has many shades of meaning. However, all flow from Jesus' plan about how he wished to be remembered. This remembering is much more than a nostalgic or emotional recollection. It is a public demonstration of imitation and discipleship."[31] Jesus chose a meal, a time of hospitality, inclusion and welcome to forever keep his memory in the minds, hearts and lives of his followers.

Like hospitality, the Eucharistic celebration faces many challenges today. David Power names the impact of diversity in celebration and the dissolution of social and moral structures of our age[32] as two factors that confront the Eucharist and demand interpretation. Powers explains that "our own time has to find a way for reading or conversing with the Eucharistic tradition that is attentive to all factors that that constitute a tradition" bringing into practices, thought, and cultural influences into interplay.[33] He notes four particular factors that facilitate a consideration of the Eucharistic tradition in the contemporary world. These factors are canon of remembrance, ritual performance, relation to ethics, and the appropriation of thought forms. Each of these factors has bearing on meaning and practice of hospitality.

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[30] "*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy," in *Vatican II the Basic Sixteen Documents: Constitutions Decrees Declarations*, ed. Austin Flannery (Northport, NY: Costello Pub., 1996), 122.

[31] Joseph A. Grassi, *Informing the Future: Social Justice in the New Testament* (New York: Paulist Press, 2003), xiii.

[32] David Noel Power, *The Eucharistic Mystery: Revitalizing the Tradition* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 6-13.

[33] Ibid., 14.

The *canon of remembrance* "is used to refer to what is taken as normative in the celebration of the Eucharist, in order that it be a faithful proclamation of Christ's death and resurrection.[34] Normative practice has of course, changed and differed from age to age in the way the Eucharist is celebrated and the way hospitality is offered. Practices include texts, prayers, and ritual in both the liturgical and popular realms. Elements such as the relationship between the presider and the assembly or guest and host, the openness and welcome (or lack of) to liturgical space or to the hospitality space, the acknowledgement or exclusion of the stranger or marginalized persons, the breaking open or suppression of symbols and metaphors all have profound theological and spiritual implications. It is these canons of remembrance that form our consciousness and understanding of the Eucharist and of hospitality given and received.

The second factor David Power names is *ritual performance*. "Rituals of any sort, when they function well, allow participants to find their place in the word that they inhabit and to relate their felt experience to a great whole."[35] This applies to both the Eucharist, with its set of rigidly prescribed rituals, and the practices of hospitality with perhaps looser, but nonetheless prescriptive, rituals. While there might be more room for creativity, meaningful hospitality will always have an element of ritual performance. Setting the table and saying a blessing together is an important hospitality practice. Both Eucharist and hospitality "places the participants within a larger world of value and meaning while presuming to offer them a common identity and bonding."[36]

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[34] Ibid., 16.

[35] Ibid., 17.

[36] Ibid.

Because of my claim that hospitality is so closely tied to the Christian moral life, a factor of particular interest is the third factor named by Power, *relation to ethics*. Power well articulates the two angles between ethics and Eucharist. The "Eucharist embodies an ethical idea that Christians are in turn expected to embody in their lives, and on the other hand, the ethics or praxis of a community bespeaks how well it has appropriated what is eucharistically expressed." Power returns to this topic at the end of his book and makes a strong statement regarding the verification of Eucharistic liturgy. "The orthodoxy of the Eucharistic canon is verified by the orthopraxis of solidarity with victims and with those who hope and serve the fullness of human life, even in the midst of suffering and injustice."[37] This way in which the Eucharist extends itself into hospitality praxis is a central topic in my work and is taken up in greater detail in the following sections. Suffice to say that for the claim made in *Sacrosanctum Concilium* "From the liturgy, therefore, and especially from the Eucharist, grace is poured forth upon us as from a fountain"[38] to be verified, we must look to see how this grace it is shared among all the members, especially the poor and suffering, in the community.

The fourth factor Powers suggests must be included in a contemporary interpretation of the Eucharist is the u*se of thought-forms*. By this he means, paying close attention to the philosophical explanations from which a particular understanding of the tradition arises. If, as a practical method asserts, all praxis is theory-laden, then the philosophical theories and cultural patterns of thought driving a particular praxis must be acknowledged and interpreted. For example, in Eucharistic theology, "the forms that it

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[37] Ibid., 348.

[38] "*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy."

has been given and the ways in which it is interpreted are much influenced by the ideas that people in a culture have of cosmos and history and by how they distinguish between or relate the order of creation, the general flow of human history, and the history of salvation."[39] The same argument can be applied to hospitality as evidenced from the ways hospitality patterns have changed through history as described in Chapter Three. To add another dimension to the discussion, the current philosophical thought-forms present in postmodernism, and in its ensuring cultural situation is taken up in Chapter Five.

I move on now to other aspects of the Eucharist continuing to bring these four factors – remembrance, ritual, ethics, and thought - into interplay in the following sections.

The Shared Meal

> "A shared meal is the activity most closely tied to the reality of God's Kingdom, just as it is the most basic expression of hospitality."[40]

The Eucharist and hospitality share both a metaphor and a practice that animates the Christian life: the shared meal. The importance of the shared meal cannot be overstated in the Eucharistic tradition or in practices of hospitality. Both are indeed, God's self communication and a sacramental event. David Power's statement "The sacramental event is therefore a coming forth of that grace into symbolic expression so that reality may be seen and personally lived in the explicit faith of divine gift and

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[39] Power, 19.

[40] Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition*, 30.

presence"[41] applies equally to the Eucharist and hospitality. If Eucharist is the primordial sacrament then it follows that hospitality is the primordial ministry. By this I mean that both the Eucharist and hospitality originate in what is most essential, fundamental and central to the Christian life. Christina Pohl claims "The Eucharist most fundamentally connects hospitality with God because it anticipates and reveals the 'heavenly table of the Lord.'"[42] Christian people experience the graces of incorporation, inclusion, and reconciliation at both the Eucharistic meal and at the shared table of hospitality.

This shared table is always a reminder, an extension and a continuation of the Eucharistic meal. While practices of hospitality encompass a wide variety of activities, the act of gathering around one table to break bread, share a meal and a conversation represents the essence of hospitality. "The table is a place you connect and belong. It is a place where the past remains alive in the memory of the very old, and the future sparkles with possibilities."[43] The simple and profound experience of human relating and memory making take place at a shared table. True social transformation is possible under these circumstances. "It is often in the context of shared meals that social boundaries are redrawn or reshaped. The meal combines the ordinary with the sacred and challenged conventional relationships with heavenly expectation."[44] Sitting down, breaking bread and sharing a cup together has the potential to change and build relationships like nothing else can.

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[41] Power, 271.

[42] Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition*, 30.

[43] Homan and Pratt, 108.

[44] Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition*, 56.

Jesus and the Shared Meal

The shared meal is a central organizing point in Jesus' lifestyle and ministry. Found in every gospel, these mealtime occasions are a foreshadowing of the eschatological banquet and have layered multivalent meanings including directions on how Christians are to relate to one another. The emphasis on the shared meal in Jesus' life points to the meaning of the meal along with importance of hospitality. As Patrick McCormick points out "In a series of meals taken with friends and strangers Jesus preaches and practices a hospitality that makes room for the poor and the needy and that calls his disciples to do likewise."[45]

In Dining in the Kingdom, Eugene La Verdiere separates the meals that Jesus shared in Luke's Gospel into the three distinct phases; 1) meals at the table with Jesus the prophet; 2) meals at the table with Jesus the Christ, and 3) meals at the table of Jesus the Lord.[46]

The first phase, meals at table with "Jesus the Prophet" tells the story of Jesus' unfolding destiny. They take place during the active phase of Jesus' Galilean ministries (Luke 5:1 – 9:50) and on the way to the events of the Passion and Resurrection (Luke 9:51- 21:38). Jesus speaks and acts like a prophet in each of these meals. For example, at the home of Levi the tax collector, the meal time experience is proclaimed as a conversion event. "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I have come to call not the righteous but sinners to repentance" (Luke 5:27-39), and at home of an important Pharisee (14:7-24) where Jesus use the seating and the guest list

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[45] McCormick, 45.

[46] Eugene LaVerdiere, *Dining in the Kingdom of God: The Origins of the Eucharist According to Luke* (Chicago, IL: Liturgy Training Publications, 1994), 24.

to instruct on the humility required for Kingdom living. "But when you are invited, go and sit down at the lowest place, so that when your hosts comes, he may say to you, friend move up higher; then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at the table with you. For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted" (Luke 13:10-11.) He then goes on the caution against inviting only guests who can repay your hospitality and instead suggests inviting the marginalized, the social outcasts, and those without a place in the world. "And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous" (Luke 14:14). The meals at the table of Jesus the prophet unfold an ecclesiology that outlines the most basic tenets of Christian life. La Verdiere names these practices as "the Eucharist as the call to discipleship among the followers of Jesus; the inclusiveness of the church as the community of the Twelve; and the Church's mission to gather the hungry for the breaking of the bread."[47] Clearly, hospitality plays a central role in the implementation of each of these practices in the Christian life.

The second phase, meal at the table with "Jesus the Christ" is found in each Gospel has an account of what is commonly referred to as the "Last Supper" (Mk 14:1-27, Matt 26:1-30, Luke 14:7-20, John 13: 1-20), although it is not called the last supper anywhere in the Scriptures. While Jesus' prophetic edge remains in the discourse of the Last Supper, it is at this shared meal that his mission as the Christ is fulfilled. Joe Grassi suggests the following themes are present in the Last Supper accounts and in the description of the functioning of the early Christian community.

1) In order to follow Jesus, one must serve "the least" – the poor, the needy, the hungry;

[47] Ibid., 26.

2) Real service involves direct participation in the process of relieving the suffering of others – the twelve personally handed bread to the poor;

3) Certainly there must be leaders in the community, but they must eschew the use of power and avoid dominating and controlling the group's thinking and actions; and

4) All members of the Christian community must collectively reflect on Jesus' actions and words and then convert that reflection into actions of sharing and service. [48]

Again, the hospitality plays a prominent role in achieving these gospel goals. The Last Supper becomes the first expression of the Lord's Supper, to which all are invited, as well as the memorial of Christ's passion-resurrection and the climatic meal in Jesus' prophetic ministry.[49]

The final phase then is the meal at table with "Jesus the Lord" in the post-resurrection time. Again, meals, food, and eating play a significant role in the inaugurating the new era. The shared table is the place where the disciples of Emmaus come to know that Jesus is Lord. They encounter Jesus walking on the road but they do not know who he is…"but their eyes were kept from recognizing him" (Luke 24:13-35). A favorite of mine, this story always make me wonder how often my eyes are kept from seeing Jesus because of my own lack of humility or self-centeredness. But Jesus is patient, engaging and teaching from the Scriptures and finally, sitting down at table with them with them and blessing and breaking the bread so as to reveal himself as the Risen Lord. LaVerdiere explains that "In the story of Emmaus, the risen Lord was really

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[48] Grassi, *Broken Bread and Broken Bodies: The Lord's Supper and World Hunger*.

[49] LaVerdiere, *Dining in the Kingdom of God: The Origins of the Eucharist According to Luke*, 29.

present in and through a stranger on the church's journey."[50] This is the story of hospitality as well. The risen Lord is present in and through strangers, if we but only invite them in and open our eyes to see and our hearts to welcome.

In another post-resurrection appearance in the following passage, food and a meal again enter the picture. Again the disciples don't recognize Jesus. This time they think he is ghost, so he offers His peace and to assuage their fears patiently shows his wounded hands and feet and side to the unbelievers. And, then he announces he is hungry! "Have you anything to eat?" (Luke 24: 41) Note that he had to ask, no one offered him anything to eat or drink for in their shock, curiosity, disbelief, fear and self-involvement they forgot to be hospitable. How many times, oh Lord, have we forgotten to be hospitable for the same reasons? And his final physical act on the earth prior to the Ascension, he eats a piece of broiled fish as he talks with his disciples about their life and their future.

In John's Gospel, Jesus organizes a meal for his disciples. "Come and have breakfast" (John 21:12). This invitation follows the passage where Jesus assists with solving the practical problem of the moment - no fish in the nets. Although the disciples again don't recognize Jesus, he comes to their rescue with affection and good humor. "Children, you have no fish, have you? Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some" (John 21: 5-6). And lo and behold, a hundred and fifty three fish later, someone finally says, "It is the Lord!" Imagine the charged atmosphere of the moment as Jesus cooked the outdoor breakfast, a "power" breakfast if there ever was one, and served his disciples a meal of bread and fish. Nathan Mitchell explains that, "In the ancient Mediterranean world …*what* one eats, *how* one eats, and *with whom* one eats are essential

[50] Ibid., 180.

clues to social status, rank and power. The table (and the rituals that happen there) have thus become complex metaphors for social control, for gauging social standing, for determining religious allegiance."[51] Jesus' proclamation that all foods are clean (Mk 7:18-20), his service to others at mealtimes, and his insistence that everyone was welcome at every table does nothing less than call for a new world order. In the context of the discussion of Jesus as role model for Christian identity, the shared meal has a particular meaning. It clear that to learn to be like Jesus means to reverence time at table and understand the meal as the locus of physical and spiritual nourishment. Nathan Mitchell explains, "...the story of Jesus is the story of the bread-breaker who becomes the bread broken. Jesus' history – and that of his disciples – thus becomes a history of food, a history of table fellowship."[52] Jesus is both 'host' and 'meal' for he offers his body and blood for others – no greater hospitality than this exists and it is this extraordinary self-giving that Christians are called to emulate through hospitality.

The Passover Seder

> On the day of the Unleavened Bread, the disciples came to Jesus saying, "Where do you want us to make the preparations for you to eat the Passover? He said, "Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, "The Teachers says, my time is near; I will keep the Passover at your home with my disciples. So the disciples did as Jesus directed them, and they prepared the Passover meal.
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> Matthew 26:17-19

For as long as I can remember, at least forty-five years, I have gone with my family to a Passover Seder every year at the home of close family friends, Schatzi and

[51] Mitchell, *Real Presence*, 53.

[52] Ibid., 71.

Stanley Kassal. Perhaps nothing in my life, except the communion line I get in weekly, has educated me more about the power and meaning of the shared meal, than this yearly family event. As I mentioned earlier, my mother was Catholic, my father Jewish, and since we children were raised as Catholics, attendance at the Seder was a somewhat foreign and exotic event. Long before I was old enough or educated enough to consciously understand the concept of "ritual" or reflect on the theological meaning of the "shared meal," the Passover Seder was my great teacher on these topics.

The Seder is a great Jewish feast that takes place on the first evening of the Jewish holiday of the Passover. The actual date each year varies depending as Passover is celebrated on the 15th day of Nisan on the Hebrew calendar.[53] There have been many years when the Passover Seder fell during Holy Week making it a multivalent experience for me. Central to Jewish identity, you will find both observant and non-observant Jews gathering for to celebrate the Passover feast. And, a wonderful feast it is, rich with meaning, gorgeous ritual, delicious food, and deeply rooted connections of families and friends. Family history, the passing of time, and the joys and hardships of life's journey is marked at the annual gathering. The ebb and flow of the life cycle fills us with gratitude and reminds us of the finiteness of our existence as the group grows with the birth of beautiful children and shrinks with searing loss as beloved ones in our Passover community die.

Seder is from the Hebrew root word meaning "order," because there is a specific set of information that must be covered in a specific order. The order of the Seder ritual is taken from the ancient Haggahah text. All gathered, usually between forty and fifty in

[53] "Passover Seder," in *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, 1.

total, follow the Haggahah booklet put on our place and we take turns reading the ever familiar and ever new words of the service. The Seder relives the enslavement and Exodus of the Jewish people from Egypt into the Promised Land with the contrasting the themes of slavery and freedom expressed in the rituals in which we partake. The symbols at the Seder are many, and do accomplish what Stephen Happel claims in his definition of symbol. "A symbol is a complex of gestures, sounds, images, and/or words that evoke, invite, and persuade participation in that to which they refer. Symbols have multiple levels of meaning."[54] The universal Passover symbols blend with the particular symbols of our gathering. We drink the wine four times reciting in Hebrew and then in English, "Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe, who creates the fruit of the vine," and we dip the *karpas*, usually a piece of parsley, in salt water to symbolize the tears shed as a result of slavery. The bitter herbs, *maror* and *chazeret* (shaved horseradish) are a symbol of the bitterness and harshness of slavery. The yummy, homemade *charoset*, a mixture of apples, nuts, cinnamon, honey and wine, symbolizes the mortar used by the Jews in building during the enslavement. It is eaten together with the bitter herbs on one of the three pieces of matzo that are part of the service. Two of these represent the two breads that are used weekly at Shabbat dinners, the third piece of matzo, referred to as "the bread of affliction," represents the unleavened bread that the Jews had to remove from the ovens before rising in their haste to depart Egypt. Much of the evening's ritual is focused on the children both to include them and to hand down the tradition. The four questions beginning with "Why is this night different from all other nights?" are answered by the children, who have clearly been practicing for this moment. It is lovely

[54] Stephen Happel, "Symbol," in *The New Dictionary of Sacramental Worship*, ed. Peter E. Fink (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1990), 1238.

to see the beaming faces of the parents during their recitation of the long, complicated answers.

The presiding matriarch of our gathering is Schatzi Kassal, an extraordinary woman whose life has been dedicated to family and service to others. Highly accomplished, she is known throughout our community for her good works and kindness to those in need. While Schatzi must be in her mid-seventies by now, she appears exactly the same to me as she did when we met some forty-five years ago. She never seems to tire or to change and she is full of life and love with an empathy for the suffering of others that is palpable. She and her husband, Stanley are a link and reminder for me of my parents who were their contemporaries and life-long friends. My siblings and I grew up with Shatzi and Stanley's children, and over time, spouses joined our group followed by children many of whom are now young adults. One year I remember counting seven highchairs and watching the children grow from year to year has been one of the great joys of our Passover tradition. Many years, too, we are confronted with the empty chairs of those who have died during the year and loss sadly fills the air - poignant reminders of time passing and the fragility of life.

Several parts of the ritual stand out in my memory and have particular meaning to me. The hand washing ritual, symbolic preparation for eating the *karpas,* was for many years punctuated with Schatzi's delightful mother, Eleanor "Nanny" Rosenthal, saying "Use my bathroom, darling" to Uncle Lou, one of the elder guests acting on behalf of the group. Often when we would look over at Nanny Rosenthal, she would be holding the hand of her dear friend, my own Granny Pearl, and the two would be laughing together like school girls. My New Orleans born and bred mother used to lead the group is the

Passover song of gratitude "*Dayaynu*," her Southern accent and slight mispronunciation adding a certain charm. We never sing "*Dayaynu*" without Schazti recalling my Mother's rendition and asking one of her grandchildren to lead us in remembering her. The words of gratitude "*dayaynu*...it would have been enough" as God's miracles of the Exodus are recounted in the Haggadah have special meaning reminding me to never cease being grateful to God for the many gifts of my life.

For years and years, my father hid the *afikomen*, one of the three pieces of matzo on the table that is traditionally the last food eaten at the Seder. It is hidden in the early part of the dinner and when dinner is finished, the children search for it in hopes of getting a prize – in our case, a cash gift. I treasure the image of the children throughout the years - the little girls in the party dresses and stocking feet, the little boys in their ties and shiny loafers - scampering throughout the house, squealing with excitement as they searched high and low for the napkin containing the matzo. Of course, my father always gave a first prize and "consolation" prizes so everyone was a winner with lots of delighted children waving twenty dollar bills. I love it too, when we open the door for Elijah the ancient prophet to enter our midst calling us to sharpen our ears and open our hearts to the prophetic voices of our own time.

While there is scholarly disagreement, some contradictions in the gospels, and no final consensus on whether Jesus' final meal was a actually Passover Seder,[55] there can be no doubt that the gathering of the twelve for dinner on the last night of Jesus' life bears many similar characteristics to the Passover meal still celebrated today. Kenan Osborne and J. Jeremias list some of the indicators are that the Last Supper was a

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[55] See Kenan *Osborne's The Christian Sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist*, (New York and Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1987) for a discussion on this topic.

Passover Seder. It was celebrated after sundown rather than prior to sundown as was the ordinary time for dinner. Special preparations were made for the dinner beyond the normal preparations. At the Last Supper they reclined which was a position associated with Passover as opposed to squatting around the fire as was the custom at regular meals. A state of levitical purity was required at the Passover dinner where ritual washing was mandated giving a strong explanation for the washing of feet as mentioned in John's gospel (John 13:1-18). Wine was served with the meal and the Passover required it. Bread is broken in Mark and Matthew. They sang hymns (perhaps the very same *Dayaynu* that we sing at the Seder I attend!).[56] In John's Gospel, the Last Supper is located before the Passover feast (John 13:1) leading some scholars to argue against the Last Supper as Passover meal. But whether or not the Last Supper was the Passover meal or not in no way detracts from the richness of the tradition as a source of inspiration, theological reflection, and a model for Christian living. The symbols present in the Last Supper and the Eucharist "disclose reality by making available to their participants meaning and values that involve them intellectually, emotionally and morally, while exceeding the physical components of the signifier. Part of their emotional power is due to the multiplicity of appeals."[57] There is much to be learned from different forms of the shared meal. The accounts of Jesus' last meal before His passion, the annual Passover feast in my own life, and the countless meals where we are host or guest, all provide meaning, continuity, opportunity and challenge. The shared meal links the meta-narrative of Christian faith and the personal narrative of our own lives lived with and for

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[56] Kenan B. Osborne, *The Christian Sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist* (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 165 - 167.

[57] Happel, 1238.

others. The shared meals of our own lives are themselves canons of remembrance and ritual events. The fact that Jesus would select a meal, and use eating and drinking as the way he commanded his disciples to keep his memory points to the importance of the meal and the acts of eating together. It is reason that the Eucharist, the quintessential shared meal, is one of the most important ways Christian identity is formed. Basic staples, bread and wine, both originating in the earth, become food and drink for the journey towards salvation. "Breaking bread has two essential meanings that can never be separated: it is an effective source of spiritual nourishment as well as call for actual food."[58] Spiritually, the shared meal is a time of communion, places of refreshment and renewal, and the way we go about sharing meals defines us morally.

No Meal for 1.3 Billion People

> Extreme (absolute) poverty means that households cannot meet basic needs for survival. They are chronically hungry, unable to access health care, lace the amenities of safe drinking water and sanitation, cannot afford education for some or all of the children, and perhaps lack a rudimentary shelter-a roof to keep the rain out of the hut, a chimney for ventilation to remove the smoke from the cook stove-basic articles of clothing, such as shoes.
>
> Jeffrey D. Sachs
> *The End of Poverty*[59]

In sharp contrast to the Passover feast and the unlimited gift of the Eucharist is the horrifying reality that the some **1.3 billion people** (a bit more than one fifth of the world's population), **live is extreme (absolute) poverty**.[60] About 11 million children

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[58] Grassi, *Broken Bread and Broken Bodies: The Lord's Supper and World Hunger*, xiii.

[59] Jeffrey D. Sachs, *The End of Poverty: Economic Possibilities for Our Time* (New York: Penguin Books, 2005), 20.

[60] Ibid., 289.

under the age of five (about 30,000 a day) die from malnutrition and mostly preventable diseases.[61] More than 1 billion people in developing countries, roughly 18% of the world's population, lack access to safe drinking water. The U.N. estimates that with adequate supplies of safe water and sanitation, the incidences of some illnesses and death could drop by 75%.[62] Currently "more than eight million people around the world die each year because they are too poor to stay alive. They die namelessly and without public comment."[63] Writing in the Introduction to *Pathologies of Power*, Amartya Sen reveals that sub-Saharan Africa, the median age of death is less than five years, and that was before the worst of the AIDS epidemic hit the area. And even if one makes it beyond the first five years, life is comprehensively marginal, almost beyond the Western imagination.

> Having made it beyond those early years, it may be difficult for us to imagine how restricted a life so many of our fellow human beings lead, what little living they manage to do. There is, of course, the wonder of birth (impossible to recollect), some mother's milk (sometimes not), the affection of relatives (often thoroughly disrupted), perhaps some schooling (mostly not), a bit of play (amid pestilence and panic), and then things end (with or without a rumble). The world goes on as if nothing much has happened. [64]

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[61] Charles Dickens and others, *A Tale of Two Cities* (New York: Pocket Books, 2004).

[62] *United Nations Report* (2002).

[63] Sachs, 1.

[64] Paul Farmer, *Pathologies of Power: Health, Human Rights, and the New War on the Poor: With a New Preface by the Author*, California Series in Public Anthropology (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), xi.

This stark description dramatically highlights the failure of the human community to be hospitable and translate into untold agony and suffering for millions of men, women and children.[65] In a very tangible and explicit way, we are simply not getting the message that the Eucharist is meant to convey. If the Eucharistic celebration doesn't extend itself into hospitable praxis then its meaning is truncated and distorted. David Power returns to this topic at the end of his book and makes the strong statement that "In this age of liturgical crisis, it is important for the church to look at the contrast experiences and the contrast liturgical models provided by those communities that live the struggle for freedom in faith, love and hope."[66] The shared table of the both Eucharist and the hospitality gatherings that the "haves" of this world are blessed to participate in, and the utter abundance and extravagance of God's bounty at these joyful occasions is a dark contrast experience with the food insecurity experienced daily by millions of people through the world. I always find the term "food insecurity," the current politically correct terminology used to describe the experience of starvation, to be insultingly euphemistic for it really means 'no meal' and 'no sharing' accompanied by the agony of physical starvation, and psychological and spiritual pain of abandonment when no one cares or helps. This reality challenges, interrupts and diminishes the tangible and symbolic meaning of the shared meal. The shared table of the Eucharist and its extension into hospitality calls us to attend to the needs of the poor. Nathan Mitchell advises "Make your Eucharistic table a place of lavish abundance and extravagant service, where the

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[65] While these statistics refer to people in developing countries, I in no way wish to ignore the less devastating, but none the less terrible poverty Sach's names as "moderate" and "relative" poverty which affects approximately another billion people, many of whom live in the United States. For example, almost one child in four, about 23 percent, grows up in poverty.

[66] Power, 313.

tired, the poor, the hungry, and all who are driven by despair and need may find real food, real rest, real comfort, real nurture. Indeed, it is the abundant presence of these things that signals the presence of Jesus, of God, as table partner."[67] The shared table reveals the gifts of communion and community and unfolds an aspect of the Paschal Mystery that is the foundation of the Christian life. David Power explains that "In the gift given at the table, the self-gift of Christ on the cross is mediated and the life of the Spirit is shared in communion with the Risen Lord."[68] The peace and light of the Risen Lord casts a bright shadow on the shared table making communion possible but as long as we allow our brothers and sisters to starve to death, we insult and diminish the Eucharist, sully the remembrance of Jesus Christ, and make enduring communion impossible. The Eucharist needs the ordinary practices of hospitality to truly be the Eucharist.

A TANGIBLE RESPONSE: THE WORKS OF MERCY

If Christians want to be experience genuine and on-going conversion, they must put hospitality into action in their lives on a daily basis. There can be no interpretation that suggests that conversion is anything other than a practical, hands-on reality. Choose what ever dimension of conversion you fancy - be it intellectual, affective, moral, or socio-political, to get you moving in the right direction. Just move as if your life depends on it, because it does.

One can tell if someone has truly digested (not just comsumed) the Bread of Life and the Cup of Salvation, for their lives will be marked by the outward gestures of hospitable

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[67] Mitchell, *Real Presence*, 57.

[68] Power, 293.

care for their brothers and sisters. Getting in the communion line, contemplation of the "real presence" of the Risen Lord in the sacrament, prayers however pious, sentiments and good feeling be they wonderful and comforting, all ring hollow if the work of hospitality does not follow. Writing from Africa, Miriam Ayieko points out, "The saying that 'a person is what he/she eats' should remind Christians, who *eat* Jesus, the Food of Eternal Life that they have to *become* Jesus to those around them. Jesus will use them to minister to others in loving service."[69]

If you are not sure what to do to put hospitality into action, I suggest turning to the Gospel and the tradition for guidance. People often come to me to lament their disappointment and concern about the Church – the terrible sexual scandals, the exclusion of women from leadership, the rejection of gays and lesbians from the community, the sadness of remarried Catholics who are turned away from the Eucharist, more interest in rules and regulations than hospitality and mercy - the list of legitimate concerns goes on. Rather than try to defend the Church, I always direct people to what James Keenan calls "the heart of Catholicism" – the works of mercy. The works of mercy are what is most enduring, most authentic, closest to what Jesus' intended the Church to be. They are clearly laid out when Jesus narrates the scenario for the Last Judgment in Matthew 25: 31-46.

> When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him and he will separate people from one another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand, and the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, "Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for when I was hungry you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I

[69] Miriam Ayieko, "The Eucharistic Meal for the Christian Life," *AFER* 42, no. no. 5-6 (2000), 5.

> was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me." The righteous will answer him, "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food or thirst and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?" And the king will answer them, "Truly, I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me."

Joe Grassi points out, "We can sum up Matthew's viewpoint as follows: Instances of serving the hungry, thirsty. Poor and sick are much more than specific acts of kindness. They are part of the gospel itself, necessary responses to Jesus' command to feed the hungry. They also direct personal service to Jesus himself and likewise to God."[70]

Where to start? Often the needs are vast and overwhelming. The problems complex and seemingly insurmountable. What can one person do? Not every gesture has to be grand. Most of the works of mercy are anything but grand. They are practical, humble acts offered by one person to another. Consider the good advice of Ophelia Dahl, one of the leading and most effective health-care advocates of our time. Speaking at the 2006 Commencement of her alma mater, Wellesley College, she chronicled the history of Partners in Health, the extraordinary organization she co-founded that provides health care to the poor in communities worldwide and works untiringly to influence the health care agenda on a global level. Explaining that she and her colleagues began "without a budget, followed their instincts, learned as they went along and made lots of mistakes," Ms. Dahl told the thousand bright and talented young Wellesley women with so many

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[70] Grassi, *Broken Bread and Broken Bodies: The Lord's Supper and World Hunger*, 57.

options and opportunities to "feel free to start small, but allow yourself to imagine very expansively."[71]

Starting small requires no special training, no special skills, little in the way of resources if you are willing to part with some of what you have. You do not have to look far to find your brothers and sisters in need of help. James Keenan begins a list of contemporary people in need that includes refugees, adolescent runaways, and women who are victims of domestic violence.[72] To this I would add many of our children, people with disabilities, many of our elderly, substance abusers, the homeless and large numbers of people who do not have the basic necessities including food, shelter, transportation, health care or employment. Practice the corporal works of mercy with intentionality. Numbering seven, the first six are taken directly from Matthew 25:31-45, and address the corporal or bodily, material side of life. Feed the hungry. Give drink to the thirsty. Shelter the homeless. Clothe the naked. Visit the sick. Visit the imprisoned. Bury the dead is a third century add-on inspired by the Book of Tobit (1:17-19). Simple in concept, related directly to the physical needs and the situation of millions, the corporal works of mercy must be interpreted quite literally in light of the fact that millions of people are hungry, don't have clean, accessible water, live without shelter, and don't have shoes or clothes. They are sick with no access to medical care or hospitals and often no one to care for them. Many people languish in inhumane prisons or are being held as political prisoners. Many die because of our failure to perform the first six mercies – dying way before their time making a mockery of the work of mercy that calls for burying the dead with respect, remembrance and love.

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[71] Ophelia Dahl. Commencement Address, Wellesley College, 2007.

[72] Keenan, *The Works of Mercy: The Heart of Catholicism.*

Those who have been blessed with education and training can often be very good at the spiritual works of mercy which are giving good counsel, teaching the ignorant, calling sinners to conversion, consoling the afflicted, pardoning offenses and injuries, bearing offensives patiently, and praying for the living and the dead. James Keenan explains, "Each of them calls for a certain spiritual awareness, a certain in-depth, intuitive attentiveness to the needs of others. Recognizing a person as naked, imprisoned, or infirmed rarely requires a particular competency. But seeing one as afflicted, in doubt, reckless, or alienated requires a certain ready psychological sensitivity to the internal needs of one's neighbor."[73] To be good at the spiritual works of mercy asks us to be patient, willing to give freely of our time, and adopting the correct mindset to counsel without patronization or judgment. The task of calling those who lives may be less than exemplary or marked by psychological struggle requires humility and an awareness of our own limitations. Those of us who are haughty and filled with self-importance could well heed the works of mercy that calls for bearing offenses patiently and pardoning offenses and injuries. Praying for the living and the dead calls us to intentional mindfulness of others, both those with us and those who have gone before us.

The works of mercy, the actualization of the tender mercy of God's compassion for humanity, is what Paul Farmer calls "pragmatic solidarity."

> 'Pragmatic solidarity' is different from but nourished by solidarity per se, the desire to make common cause with those in need. Solidarity is a precious thing: people enduring great hardship often remark that they are grateful for the prayers and good wishes of fellow human beings. But when sentiment is accompanied by the good and services that might diminish unjust hardship, surely it is enriched. To those in great need,

[73] Ibid., 64.

> solidarity without the pragmatic component can seem like so much abstract piety.[74]

Abstract piety is not enough. Nor is empathy, pity or heartfelt concern. Good intentions avail us nothing. To use business jargon, God has delegated the task of making his tender mercy known to humans, and this is a task that requires action. Thomas Aquinas understood this when he defined mercy as "heartfelt sympathy for another's distress, impelling us to succor."[75] Both Dr. Farmer's definition of pragmatic solidarity and Thomas' definition of mercy explain with clarity and simplicity what God expects of humans. First, solidarity, that is, a compassionate heart overflowing with a deep and abiding empathy for the distress of another, and succor, that is, pragmatic assistance to the suffering one, to relieve and deliver from difficulty, want or distress. These holy acts are our job description, if you will, and it is on how effectively we deliver these acts of mercy that we will be evaluated.

I want to point out that while the task of the theologian to devote a significant amount of time and energy to research, reflection, and writing, I do so with some trepidation, for as Paul Farmer points out, "writing of the plight of the oppressed is not a particularly effective way of assisting them."[76] And yet, I take my chances in pursuing the task of writing and in doing so hope my work is a modest contribution towards the development of critical theological discourse with an unapologetic and unrelenting bias for praxis – for focused, effective and consistent action that finds its expression in

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[74] Farmer, 146.

[75] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica, II.II.30*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, 5 vols., vol. 2 (Westminster, Maryland: Christian Classics, 1948), 1948.

[76] Farmer, 26.

pragmatic solidarity with the poor, and that showers those in need with corporal and spiritual mercies.

Chapter Two opened with a discussion on the "universal call to holiness" and put forth the suggestion that I engage in "ministry is a way of life." I know this to be the case for many Christians although not necessarily articulated as such for lack of vocabulary. The works of mercy as outlined above are a model of how to engage in ministry as a way of life. No matter what your ministry, no matter what your vocation or calling, no matter what your educational or social status, no matter the amount in your bank account or your achievements, forget not that we will be judged on the tangible actions of mercy – the pragmatic solidarity – we have with the poor, the least among us, the oppressed, and the lonely other on the margins of society. Jeffery Sachs, noted economist and secular humanist, calls for an "end to the plight of one sixth of humanity that lives in extreme poverty and struggles daily for survival. Everyone on earth can and should enjoy basic standards of nutrition, health, water and sanitation, shelter and other minimum needs for survival, well-being, and participation in society."[77] Surely, the Christian community should want no less.

SUMMARY

In the last two chapters, I covered key aspects of the "inner core" of the Christian tradition, specifically Scripture, historical background material, the process of conversion, the Eucharist and the works of mercy. Each of these topics was examined from several perspectives as related to the theme of hospitality and the claims made in

[77] Sachs, 24.

this thesis-project. I believe that the central location of hospitality within the tradition has been adequately demonstrated, and that I can say, with some confidence, that hospitality holds an essential place in the Christian life. To briefly summarize, this is made clear in the following ways.

- Scriptural exegesis shows the role of hospitality in Jesus' earthly ministry, the mandate for hospitality as a requirement for salvation, making the case for hospitality as a key aspect of Christian identity.

- An examination of the process of conversion locates hospitality as critical component to the intentionally lived Christian life. It also shows how the provision of hospitality is able to effect conversion in others, supporting the claim that hospitality is socially transformative.

- Various levels of meaning in the Eucharist including remembrance, ritual participation, the dynamics of the shared meal, and ethical considerations in light of the world situation ethical link hospitality and Eucharist in multiple ways.

- Finally, the corporal and spiritual works of mercy offer a hands-on point of entry into the provision of hospitality that build on scripture, incorporate the tradition all with underlying eschatological overtones.

As compelling as these arguments may be, further and broader analysis is required. Because Christianity is firmly steeped in the secular world, looking at hospitality within the tradition is not adequate. It is not possible to meet the goal of this thesis-project, a development of a theology of hospitality, without broadening the parameters of the discussion to engage the secular culture and critical philosophical perspectives. It is to this task that I now turn in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER 5

CHRISTIAN HOSPITALITY: SEARCHING FOR A PLACE IN A POSTMODERN WORLD

INTRODUCTION

In Chapter One, I laid out my overarching claim: hospitality offers profound possibilities for social transformation in the contemporary Christian context and has the potential to build communion among the members of the Body of Christ and beyond in the diverse and fractured world we negotiate daily. I further claim that a retrieval and re-imaging of the ministry of Christian hospitality and active engagement in hospitable practices makes Christian hope manifest. To this claim, I added three fundamental assumptions that guide my thinking and the development of my work. First, that hospitality is deeply tied to Christian identity and is a central theme woven through all aspects of the tradition. Second, that hospitality is a moral practice that is essential to the intentionally lived Christian life, and third, that hospitality has the potential to be socially transformative for both the giver and the receiver, and directs Christians towards the building of a community with a realized eschatology. These assumptions have guided the discussion in the three previous chapters and have been discussed in relation to different aspects of the Christian tradition. It is now time to test my claims and assumptions in a different context by engaging critical philosophical and cultural discourses outside of Christianity. To do so, I turn to two areas: postmodernism, understood as an intellectual movement and its wild child, postmodernity with all its cultural manifestations. This discussion is done with the acknowledgement that Christianity does not operate in a vacuum, and that the intellectual and cultural happenings of the wider society impact not

only the daily lives of members of the "Christian colony" but also impact on emerging ecclesiologies, religious expression, and social action.

This Chapter represents the third movement of Don Browning's theological method, the systematic phase. One of the purposes of systematic analysis is to attempt to gain as comprehensive view of the present as possible. This effort involves broadening "the horizon" even further, and it is for this reason that I spend a considerable amount of time on attempting to interpret the contemporary culture. Of particular interest is Browning's link between the relation of understanding and morality[1] for if, as I claim, hospitality is a moral practice essential for Christian living, the understanding of morality in the contemporary culture must be explored. Browning makes a relevant point when he says:

> People living in modern pluralistic societies tend to have a variety of confessional beginning points. If they are Christians or are in some way attempting to consult Christian classics, they tend to bring questions engendered by the conflict of their contemporary practices with these classics. The conflict between contending theory-laden practices means their questions emerge out of the conflict between the Christian and non-Christian aspects of their lives.[2]

Contemporary people who self-identify as "Christian" are at least generally familiar with some form of the tradition whether or not they actively practice within a specific denomination. They are immersed in the secular world, and although somewhat skeptical they still trust in a set of core, somewhat traditional values and profess an interest in doing good. Many are concerned with social, political, moral and spiritual questions as evidenced by their commitment to the political process, involvement in

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[1] Browing's insight in this area is taken from Gadamer's hermeneutical philosophy. See *A Fundamental Practical Theology*, pages 75-110 for an in-dept discussion on this topic.

[2] Browning, 45.

charitable organizations, and pursuit of some form of religion or spirituality. Christians of all traditions are all dealing with the forces of modernity and the challenges brought to bear on communities by these forces. While still reeling from the challenges of modernity brought about by a culture of individualism and consumerism, they are now confronted with further challenges brought about by postmodernism and the culture of post modernity. The answers to the questions of "How are we doing managing all this change?" and "What have these changes wrought?" will not be available for many generations to come. In the meantime, we move forward with hope, for the responsibility for keeping the memory of Jesus Christ rests with us.

Effective response and management to the crisis' caused by of modernity and postmodernity, and ultimately whether we thrive or fail, will depend on how well we evaluate and interpret the situation in which we find ourselves. This evaluation begins with asking the following questions. First, what is postmodernism? What are the characteristics of postmodern culture? The question of how the claims and challenges of the postmodern critique and culture impact contemporary Christianity is a very broad and complex question that the scope of this thesis cannot take up in any depth. Nor will I attempt to do a comprehensive analysis of any given topic as there are far too many points of view to adequately address. I will, however, attempt to look at how Christian hospitality is impacted by the thought and culture of postmodernity.

It is important to point out several key factors that have bearing on this topic. Each of these areas will be taken up in greater depth as I proceed through this section. First, postmodernism is a vast, dense topic and not a single or discrete reality; it has many manifestations and thought forms. James Smith calls it "an admittedly pluriform and

variegated phenomenon."[3] Indeed, the very essence of postmodernism concerns itself with recognizing difference and calling into question the very topics it espouses. Nathan Mitchell tells me "There is still a lot of debate about whether or not the postmodern is a 'movement,' a 'condition,' a 'theoretical construct,' or simply a faddish label."[4] Second, there is not a radical disconnect between modernity and postmodernity or a clear line when modernity ended and postmodernity began. James A.K. Smith points out that postmodernism "does not make a clean break from modernism. There are both continuities and discontinuities between modernity and post modernity."[5] One of the difficulties of contemporary life is negotiating the modernist and postmodernist viewpoints at the same time. Third, it is important to make the distinction between postmodernism, as an intellectual, theory-driven movement, and postmodern culture in the trickle-down effect and enactment of the intellectual movement. Smith describes the difference with a good example. "Derrida's deconstructionism and Foucault's genealogy of power are examples of postmodernism; adolescent absorption in virtual reality and the triumph of the mall as temple are examples of postmodernity."[6] Finally, although aspects of the critique offered now may seem decidedly negative, this is not to imply that all of postmodernism is negative, anti-religious or anti-Christian. Some would even argue that "postmodernism is a fresh wind of the Spirit sent to revitalize the dry bones of the

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[3] James A. K. Smith, *Who's Afraid of Post-Modernism? Taking Derrida, Lyotard and Foucault to Church* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2006), 26.

[4] Nathan Mitchell, "Letter to Jennie Block," (March 12, 2007).

[5] Smith, *Who's Afraid of Post-Modernism? Taking Derrida, Lyotard and Foucault to Church*, 26.

[6] Ibid., 20.

church."[7] In fact, there is great promise and possibility in some aspects of the postmodern condition as will be explained in this chapter. This idea, along with the above mentioned points, is addressed more comprehensively now.

POSTMODERNISM: AN INTELLECTUAL MOVEMENT

Jacques Derrida. Deconstructionism. Michel Foucault. Genealogy of Power. Pragmaticism. Nihilism. Structuralism. Post-Structuralism. The Death of the Author. Jean-Francois Lyotard. These French intellectuals and these philosophical categories and terms are among many referents to the philosophical movement known as postmodernism. While it is impossible to comprehensively cover the many forms and expressions of postmodernism that exist, for the purpose of locating the topic of Christian hospitality within the postmodern situation, I will attempt to elucidate some of the basic claims of postmodernism in a simple format – a limited synthesis – if you will.

Postmodernism arose as a response to the failure of modernity, and the great hopes set out by the modernist project since the eighteenth century Enlightenment. Modernity believed that humans were rational beings with the ability to reason and control outcomes at least to some extent. Following the path of what is true and good, properly directed rationality would lead to "gradual improvement and increasing agreement"[8] for the entire human community, all of whom are entitled to inalienable rights that included individual autonomy and the ability to control one's own destiny. Of course, this "good life" envisioned for all is built on two assumptions. First, an anthropology that suggests that "humans were innately good or at least were being

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[7] Ibid., 18.

[8] Heath White, *Postmodernism 101: A First Course for the Curious Christian* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Brazos Press, 2006), 40.

transformed in that direction,"[9] and secondly, that a comprehensive and absolute truth provides a normative understanding of the vision for a "good life."

However, many of the events of the twentieth century including the Holocaust, apartheid in South Africa, world wars, the Cold war, the nuclear arms race, multiple genocides and countless destructive events in local communities caused many to consider and sadly acknowledge that the great promises of modernity were just not coming to pass. Disillusionment with modernity spawned a philosophical movement, postmodernism, that called into question the most basic underlying assumptions of modernity. Postmodernism addresses conceptual philosophical areas including language, thought, inquiry, interpretation, history, culture and hope. Its effects can be felt across many aspects of life. It impacts on the infra-structures of society in such diverse areas as architecture, economics, literature, public policy, education and theology.

In the interest of simplicity and clarity, I will present five general themes that are present in postmodernist thought, and some of the sub-themes, or nuances of these themes. This is by no means a full examination of postmodernism. The topics do, however, give a snapshot of the theories that the postmodern philosophers advance.

Loss of Confidence in Reason and Authority

The modern viewpoint placed its trust in reason and the assumption that humans could rationally determine how best to proceed with these good decisions leading to progress and resulting in the flourishing of humanity and the transformation of society. The postmodern mindset rejects this grand scheme. It claims a lack of faith in the power of reason to resolve differences and deliver solutions, and ultimately suggests the idea

[9] Ibid., 42.

that "reason leads to progress" is deeply flawed. There is double whammy here, so to speak, for not only does the postmodernist lose confidence in reason but believes that this faith in reason is precisely why modernity failed. Heath White explains "A growing suspicion that modernism's recipe was part of the problem rather than part of the solution – modernism itself was the source of moral and humanitarian failure."[10] The postmodernist believes that the modernist attempt to resolve and eliminate differences between people is actually a form of domination, coercion and oppression because it imposes the values of the dominant culture on every other culture.

A loss of confidence in authority is another characteristic of postmodernism. The popular bumper sticker "Question Authority" is a postmodern statement. Modernity put its faith in modern science, institutions and "the notion of a universal autonomous reason."[11] Postmodernity says there is no such thing as a universal anything. Even hallowed scientific authority, along with all other forms and voices of authority, including the Church, that want to dictate what to think and what to believe, are corrupt. "Scientific authority and power, like any authority or power can be abused."[12] The postmodernist resists the axiom "truth is power" because "the authority to determine what counts as true is also the power to determine who counts as important."[13] Skepticism and suspicion replace faith in reason and authority in the postmodern worldview leading to

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[10] Ibid., 44.

[11] Smith, *Who's Afraid of Post-Modernism? Taking Derrida, Lyotard and Foucault to Church*, 64.

[12] White, 55.

[13] Ibid.

the belief that "the human agent is not innocent, but brings illusion and self-deception to the epistemological task."[14]

No Universal Truth

The loss of faith in reason and authority goes hand in hand with the postmodern idea that there is no universal truth. Bear in mind that this is not a matter of having the right knowledge or finding the right truth. There simply is no common moral law, no consensus of the meaning of life, no universal good, just differing points of view that all have merit. One way to look at this is as Heath White suggests, "Unresolved differences over how to live are, in a strange way, guarantees of freedom: they ensure that we will never have anything masquerading as the One True Culture."[15]

Jean-Francois Lyotard (1924-1998)) calls "truth" into question with a scathing critique of what he calls "metanarratives." Smith describes the term to refer to "big stories – grand epic narratives (*gran reçits*) that tell an overarching tales about the world."[16] Christianity with its biblical themes, the Paschal Mystery and a long, well-developed tradition is a grand metanarrative, as is the ideology of Marxism or the American Dream, the Constitution and its claims of equality, democracy and freedom. Postmodernism is suspicious of big stories with sweeping claims that order the universe especially "modern science's pretentious claims to an ultimate theory of everything."[17]

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[14] Anthony C. Thiselton, *A Concise Encyclopedia of the Philosophy of Religion* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2002), 235.

[15] White, 46.

[16] Smith, *Who's Afraid of Post-Modernism? Taking Derrida, Lyotard and Foucault to Church*, 64.

[17] Ibid., 62.

Christopher Butler explains "these metanarratives traditionally serve to give cultural practices some form of legitimation or authority."[18] Smith claims that Lyotard's critique is not of the scope of the narrative but the nature of the claims that these narratives make. "For Lyotard, metanarratives are a distinctly modern phenomenon: they are stories that not only tell a grand story (since premodern and tribal stories do this) but also claim to be able to legitimate or prove the story's claim by an appeal to universal reason."[19] For this reason, Lyotard makes his famous statement "I define postmodern as incredulity towards metanarratives."[20]

Christopher Butler addresses the complexity and reality of Lyotard's position:

> Although there are good liberal reasons for being *against* such 'grand narratives' (on the grounds that they do not allow for disputes about value, and often enough lead to totalitarian persecution), the plausibility of Lyotard's claim for the decline of metanarratives in the late 20th century ultimately depends upon an appeal to the cultural conditions of an intellectual minority. The general *sociological* claim that such narratives are in decline in our period looks pretty thin....[21]

This claim should be comforting to some of the Christian community who fear the critique of the metanarrative threatens the strength of the Christian narrative. There is, however, a dark side to faith in the metanarrative. "It is obvious to any reader of newspapers that men and women are still more or less willing to kill one another in the name of grand narratives every day – think of *fatwa* again Salman Rushdie."[22] Think of

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[18] Christopher Butler, *Postmodernism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 20.

[19] Smith, *Who's Afraid of Post-Modernism? Taking Derrida, Lyotard and Foucault to Church*, 65.

[20] Jean François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Theory and History of Literature (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), xxiv.

[21] Butler, 14.

[22] Ibid.

grand metanarrative motivating the Islam extremists who flew American planes into four American landmarks. Conversely, one can easily list exemplary outcomes from faith in the grand narrative – the work of Mother Teresa of Calcutta and her sisters, the generosity of Bill and Melinda Gates whose dedication to the poor springs from their Catholic faith, and the work of organizations like Habitat for Humanity and Doctors Without Borders. However, Lyotard's theory poses a challenge that asks that those of us who invest in and make decisions out of grand narratives do so with intentionality and criticality.

Power is Knowledge

Simply said, in the premodern period, love of God and neighbor directed the philosophical discourse and was the overarching goal of society. In the modern period, trust in science and a belief in progress replaced love of God and neighbor as the defining orientation. In postmodernity both of these are replaced with a concern for the location of power and a deep suspicion that those who wield power have hidden and subversive agendas.

Michel Foucault (1926-1984) is the postmodern philosopher that makes the claim that power is knowledge and describes his method as "genealogy or archaeology whose take is to uncover the secret, submerged biases and prejudices that go into shaping what is called the truth."[23] This concern for the location of power manifests itself in ways such as attacking the objective claims of science, and examining the relationship between discourse and power. It ultimately lands on a critique about the "power relations that

[23] Michel Foucault in Smith, *Who's Afraid of Post-Modernism? Taking Derrida, Lyotard and Foucault to Church*, 86.

stand behind both institutions and ideals."[24] Foucault's seminal work on this topic was based on case studies in the penal system and was extended to other institutions such as hospitals, the military, and education. His concern rested with the way bureaucratic systems exert social control and therefore, gain controlling power. His theory has been translated into practice as it is now common to have a "hermeneutic of suspicion" about dominant interpretations particularly as they oppress through concentrated power. Seeking out alternative meanings is a preferred method for the postmodern.

No Universal Ethic

I once asked my undergraduate students in a "Christian Marriage and Family" class two questions. First, "is there anything that is always wrong, no matter what and in all circumstances?" And second, "is it possible to keep a promise for fifty years?" The short and quick answer was "no" to both questions. Even after discussion and many challenges to them, the answers, by and large, remained no. Like good postmodern young adults, they argued for multiple truths over absolute truths, and believe that there is no universal ethic that can be applied equally to everyone in all situations. The postmodern view rejects absolute truth and claims that no knowledge is fully reliable and no concepts are absolutely indispensable. The result of competing truths has been the development of what is commonly referred to as pluralism. "In a world of many incompatible traditions and cultures and religions, any choice among them is somewhat arbitrary. No single set of moral beliefs, no single political agenda, no single religion (much less a single nation, style of dress, cuisine, or set of holiday customs) is so

[24] Ibid.

obviously superior to others that it commands everyone's allegiance."[25] To use the vernacular, and a popular postmodern motto, these days, "Different strokes for different folks!"

The idea of a universal ethic, a set of tried and true values on which decisions can be based and life can be lived out is vehemently opposed because the claim that there is one true culture is made at the expense and oppression of other cultures. Many postmodernists claim that alternative perspectives are critical to avoid domination and coercion. The downside, and perhaps the area of greatest contention, is the fear that a lack of a universal ethic leads down the slippery slope of moral relativism. "The typical postmodernist conclusion, that universal truth is impossible, and relativism is our fate."[26]

"The central argument for Derrida's deconstructionism is relativism" claims Christopher Butler by which he means, "the view that the truth itself is always relative to the differing standpoints and predisposing intellectual frameworks of the judging subject."[27] Interestingly, Derrida's philosophical thesis making even trying to "define" the traits of postmodernism difficult for any move to articulate true, normative or final definitions is met with suspicion and distrust. Deconstructionism refuses a definition, thesis or conclusion. Everything is a "text" that requires interpretation and all interpretations are biased. For Derrida, all conceptual frameworks including language, text, symbols, indeed any form that communicates, have varying meanings and requires interpretation through close analysis seeking out dual meanings and hidden agendas that

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[25] White, 131.

[26] Butler, 16.

[27] Ibid.

may not even be known to the author. "All conceptual systems as prone to falsifying, distorting *hierarchization*. Not only is our knowledge of the world not as direct as we would like to believe – metaphor-ridden and entirely relative to the scope of our conceptual systems – but we have been all too confident about the ways in which the central categories within those systems work to organize our experiences."[28] This is where the disciplines of anthropology and hermeneutics enter the picture as tools of interpretation.

Of course, there is a very positive side to this critique that has allowed other voices, formerly unacknowledged or silenced to speak and be heard. My fourth grade daughter once asked me if I knew that that "history was told by the winners." We had a long discussion about what this meant and the fact that there are two (or more) sides to a story depending on your perspective and your worldview. I told her about "theology from the underside" and liberation theologies that give voice to the experience of entire groups of people who were not "the winners" or the voice and norms of the dominant culture. Smith points to the positive side of deconstruction. "As such, deconstruction is interested in interpretations that have been marginalized and sidelined, activating voices that have been silenced. Smith acknowledges that "This is the constructive, yea prophetic, aspect of Derrida's deconstruction: a concern for justice by being concerned about dominant, status quo interpretations that silence those who see differently."[29]

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[28] Ibid., 20.

[29] Smith, *Who's Afraid of Post-Modernism? Taking Derrida, Lyotard and Foucault to Church*, 51.

Radical Reorienting of the Self

Along with a loss of faith in reason, comes a loss of trust in the self to control its destiny. Modernity already rejected the idea of "human nature" and the true self oriented toward God. Postmodernity rejects the idea of the autonomous individual who is independent, stable and in control on one's own destiny. The idea of the free-standing, autonomous person was replaced with the concept of social construction.[30] The way that this concept has taken hold is quite apparent. For example, the practical method used in this thesis is based on the principle of social construction. I began this thesis a discussion of my social location and intentionally attempt to reveal information that would expose my biases and worldview. The context in which the ministerial events take place is given priority as an interpretive tool. Thinking in terms of "social construct" is a common approach in the social sciences, psychology and academics.

Identity politics or politics of difference is an outcome of postmodernity's theories of social location and the primacy of context. Entire "rights movements" - gay rights, disability rights, feminist rights, to name a few - resulting in huge social changes for the members of the groups are a tangible result of the rise of identity politics. This is a good example of the way modernity transitions into postmodernity. The language of "rights" is distinctively modern; the exposure of the systems that oppress is distinctively postmodern. Together, they form a notion of equality and make room for a politics of difference. The danger, however, of this radical reorientation of self is an unwieldy narcissism where one's own subjectivity is the beginning and ending point of all reality -

[30] White, 73.

avoiding this problem is one of the best reasons I can think of for not giving up on metanarratives.

I now turn to consider the culture of postmodernity that has developed as the intellectual theories of postmodernism make their way into the lives of the people and influence actions and behaviors.

POSTMODERNITY: "A CONSTELLATION OF CULTURAL PHENOMENA"[31]

The popular phase "Whatever" sums up the postmodern attitude. Along with a "whatever" stance comes a no-holds barred attitude about the free exchange of information based on the idea that all information/knowledge is equal in value and significance, no matter how personal or inane.

This can be best exemplified by a cursory look at some of the articles that appeared on my On-Line News Service today, March 9, 2007. "Newt Gingrich admits to secret affair at the same time he was aggressively prosecuting President Clinton for his affair with Monica Lewinsky." "Presidential candidate Barak Obama admits that he smokes." (This was after yesterday's news that he paid some parking tickets that were 37 years old). Ann Coulter, an Ivy League educated political commentator called presidential hopeful John Edwards, a married man with three children and former Governor of North Carolina, a "faggot." Another Presidential hopeful, mayor of New York City, Rudy Giuliani's family problems are exposed when his son, a student at Duke University, shares the news he will be playing golf, not be on the campaign trail with his father because he does not get along with his father's new wife. (We were privy to the

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[31] Smith, *Who's Afraid of Post-Modernism? Taking Derrida, Lyotard and Foucault to Church*, 20.

details of his affair when he was married just a few years ago.) Oh, and yes, Hillary Clinton flosses her teeth – we saw the picture so we know it is true. And, voted the most popular story of the day, complete with video, is "groom runs over new bride in argument." I guess the honeymoon really was over. In the last weeks, we have been subject to frantic coverage of the death and burial "rights" of a poor woman named Anna Nicole Smith. Considering the extensive coverage this non-event was given, I need not say more for I can safely assume the reader, unless sequestered in a three month trial or stranded on a desert isle, is aware of this situation. The idea that these stories are newsworthy represents the worst of postmodern culture. Aside from being a bit vitriolic, often tawdry, and unabashedly voyeuristic, this intense interest in the personal lives of people whom we do not know, reflect a greater problem than insipid curiosity! It is what goes unreported. For example, there was no mention about the 1.3 billion people that live in extreme poverty in developing countries, or the children who go to bed hungry every night in our own part of the world. Even when stories about these situations are reported, it is often through the lives of the famous rock and movie stars such as Bono, Angelina Jolie and Madonna. This pandering voyeurism seems to punctuate life in the post-modern world supported not just by the mainstream news but by dozens of magazines and television shows. Some of us don't know what is happening in the lives of our own children or our closest friends but know that one of the Olsen twins weighs only 80 pounds. We are skeptical of everyone but trust strangers with our darkest secrets.

Postmodern culture affects every area of our life including what eat and wear, the music we listen to and they way we decorate our homes. The names, schools and pedagogy we select for our children are all conditioned by the impulsive of postmodern

culture. Our every day decisions are made from a "grand, global bazaar" where things from every culture in the world are ours for the taking. We have sushi for lunch, curry for dinner, drink water from France, furnish our home with a West Indies motif, wear clothes that were designed in Milan and sewn in Taiwan. We are more likely than not to marry someone of a different ethnic background, religion or socio-economic status. We name our Irish children Franchesca and our French children Carlos, or just make up a name if there isn't one that suits us. The multiple choices, the constant adjustment to change and the integration of unlike entities can create feelings of being overwhelmed, insecurity, even hostility. Heath White claims there is a "sort of cultural vertigo – a feeling that the ground is moving under your feet. What had seemed safe and reliable now often seems strange, even threatening."[32]

Contemporary life in postmodernity is marked by what Albert Borgmann calls hypermodernism which he claims "is devoted to a technologically sophisticated and glamorously unreal universe, distinguished by its hyperreality, hyperactivity, and hyperintelligence."[33] Life is characterized by what I call "being together alone." Cell phones, laptops, blackberries, video games, reality TV, instant internet access to words and images anywhere in the world, anytime night or day grounds this hyperactivity giving way to a sense of hyperreality. I have seen many people dining in restaurants together, each one clicking away on their blackberries without conversation. It is not hard to understand the dramatic rise in hyperactive children and the accompanying new syndromes such as Attention Deficit Disorders (ADD). This hyperactivity and

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[32] White, 127.

[33] Albert Borgmann, *Crossing the Postmodern Divide* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 6.

hyperreality is accompanied by a sense of constant motion, a compression of time and space leading to a pervasive exhaustion of which most people are not even aware. The non-stop juxtaposition of the symbols and sign that form the fabric of daily life require constant interpretation. It is no wonder that "chronic fatigue" has developed into a syndrome whose origins are unknown to the medical profession.

Lamenting a Loss of Civility and Moral Structure

Perhaps the most confrontative "in your face" feature of postmodern culture is a loss of civility. This is a nice way of saying that people have lost the motivation, discipline and skills to be civil to each other. Making harsh, demeaning, overtly personal or highly critical comments to another person, known or unknown, is a commonplace occurrence. We have TV shows, like the Jerry Springer Show, dedicated to just this practice. While I would not go so far as to say that most people don't think there is anything wrong with be insulting and rude, I don't think anyone would disagree that the common courtesy has fallen on hard times. Mean is in. Rude is okay. Unfiltered anger is not held back. It is easy to understand why the moral theologians are calling for a return to virtue ethics.

A great difficulty of postmodern culture is the void created by the loss of a structure for moral decision making. Moral confusion reigns. How is one, especially a young person, to figure out what is the right thing to do? The Ten Commandments? The Gospels? Dear Abby? Parents? Friends? The role models on television? An inner mechanism known as "conscience?" The quandary caused by moral relativism goes deep and broad. It seems there is an "at least what I did wasn't as bad as..." mentality that exists that helps to settle a guilty conscience. And yet, it is not time to say that the moral

compass is broken and can't be fixed. A recent study conducted by the Pew Research Center in tandem with MacNeil/Lehrer Productions found that "Gen Nexters," the 18-25 years old sector of the population, who were raised on postmodern pabulum, are concerned with family relationships and are thoughtfully diverse on social topics. For example, "80 percent of those surveyed had talked to their parents in the last day, and as it turns out, are unexpectedly conservative on abortion but notably liberal on gay marriage. More than half support limits on abortion and 15 percent favor an outright ban. Almost half approve on gay marriage."[34] There are various ways to interpret this data. Perhaps, ready availability of birth control makes abortion seem irresponsible. Perhaps the impact of the gay rights movement that has permitted young men and women to "come out" at a much earlier age, puts a name and a face on people seeking single sex marriages – often their own friends. Perhaps they just remain dependent on their parents, or instead love and respect them and deeply value the primary connection. Ann Hulbert suggests that "an ethos emerges that looks at once refreshingly pragmatic and yet still idealistic. Gen Nexters are not willing to ignore what is troubling about abortion and what is equally troubling about intolerant exclusion. A hardheadedness, but also a high-mindedness and softheartedness, seems to be at work."[35] These statistics show a concern for family connection and for children's interest. Maybe being forced to deal with ambiguity and difference gives these young people a sensitivity and concern for others beyond themselves. Perhaps learning to interpret, discern, and question has yielded good results.

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[34] Ann Hulbert, "Beyond the Pleasure Principle: Will the Next Generation End the Culture Wars?," *The New York Times Magazine* March 11, 2006, 15.

[35] Ibid., 18.

HOSPITALITY AND POSTMODERNITY

The just described characteristics of postmodern culture do not paint a particularly attractive picture of life in the postmodern world, and in this section, I would like to address some of the more attractive characteristics of postmodernity particularly as they relate to Christian hospitality. I sometimes remind my children that we, as humans, are bound by time, space and embodiment. We cannot be anywhere other than where we are at this very minute nor we cannot send our "astrobodies" forward or backward in time. We have to live in our own time and our own culture and only the hopeless fail to do so. This time, our time, like all times, is filled with grace if we but know what to do with it. As Charles Dickens puts in opening of *A Tale of Two Cities*, "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of Hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us..."[36] Dicken's apt description of postmodernity (written in 1859) reminds us that we are not as special as we think we are! And this time and culture certainly has its attractive features.

The pluralism created by postmodernity offers unique opportunities for exposure to cultures and people that can broaden our experience and worldview. Less homogeneous groupings bring with them many gifts. There is less pretension and more openness to difference. People who formerly found themselves on the margins or excluded from opportunities – people with disabilities, gays and lesbians, people of color, and women – enjoy previously unavailable access to opportunity for community integration. People laugh a lot in postmodernity, and the irreverence of the day can be

[36] Charles Dickens, A Tale of Two Cities (New York: Pocket Books, 2004), 5.

refreshing. While the personal nature of information sharing can be off-putting especially to people from my generation, postmodernity has shined a bright light on some of the darkest human experiences bringing them out into the open where pain and shame can be healed. While "mean is in" so is compassion and there is an unprecedented generosity on global level beginning with the richest people in the world and supported by millions of others who share a commitment to end poverty in our lifetime. The international commitment to share the medical advances of the Western world with the poor in developing countries is nothing short of spectacular. In times of disaster and tragedy, overwhelmingly generous support pours into devastated places from all corners of the globe. America is among the most philanthropic country in the world supporting every conceivable area of human need.[37]

While I have not addressed the impact of the technological revolution is any detail, and while technology surely has its problems and dark side, technology has advanced communication exponentially and offered many good things to society including unprecedented access to information to increasingly large numbers of people. At the personal level I think that most would agree that technology has improved our lives both professionally and personally - with e-mail providing the opportunity for wonderful communication opportunities with family and friends. I will always remember my father, while in his seventies, learning to use e-mail so he could write and receive e-mails from his grandchildren.

Postmodernity's aggressive demand for interpretation and self-criticality regarding the narratives in which we invest and our personal actions have the potential to

[37] According to the National Philanthropic Trust, Americans gave away $260,28 billion dollars in 2005 to 1,01,400 charitable organizations.

be powerful experiences of conversion. At this point, I must ask if there is a role and place for hospitality in the postmodern culture? Or does one have to be a protestor of postmodernity to be a practitioner of Christian hospitality? Albert Borgmann, Jacques Derrida and Nathan Mitchell would argue otherwise. These three voices come from varying perspectives and traditions (two Americans; Borgmann, an Episcopalian philosophy professor, and Mitchell, a Roman Catholic former monk and present theologian; and Derrida, a French atheist philosopher). Each touches on a different dimension and provides perspective and insight into the question of the role, location and meaning of Christian hospitality in the postmodern world.

Jacques Derrida and Unconditional Hospitality

Postmodern philosophers such as Derrida, Foucault, and Lyotard are notoriously dense both in thought and translation. Practical thinkers attempting to translate dense philosophers and their theories into praxis often experience some frustration in making the transition from thought to practice. However, entertaining the thoughts of the philosophical movements of our times has great value to practical projects because philosophy is an important "text" that trickles down to create the practical wisdom that Browning claims grounds all praxis. To that end, Jacques Derrida's thoughts on hospitality bear examination. He considered the topic of hospitality because of his interest in justice and ethics, and ultimately his concern for the human community. He proposes a radical, "pure" hospitality that has no limits and no restrictions, and critiques a hospitality that sets limits and boundaries. Derrida explains his understanding of hospitality in the following way:

> I must be unprepared, or prepared to be unprepared, for the unexpected arrival of any other. Is this possible? I don't know. If, however, there is pure hospitality, or pure gift, it should consist in this opening without horizon, without horizon of expectation, an opening to the newcomer whoever that may be. It may be terrible because the newcomer may a good person, or may be the devil, but if you exclude the possibility that the newcomer is coming to destroy your house – if you want to control this and exclude in advance this possibility – there is no hospitality.[38]

Welcome the devil? Coming to destroy your house? Oh, my! Derrida acknowledges the challenges inherent in this proposal when he asks "Is this possible? I don't know." Although Derrida acknowledges that his concept of hospitality is an aporia, that is, an insoluble contradiction or paradox in a text's meaning, he does not back off. He unequivocally advocates an unconditional hospitality. His proposal and the varying critiques of his thought[39] are complicated, engaging a number of other modern philosophers and touching on numerous philosophical categories.[40] In one sense, it is impossible to adequately discuss the Derrida's work in any comprehensive way. Having said that, I believe it is nonetheless helpful to examine Derrida on hospitality, at least in a limited way even if only to consider what Derrida's unconditional hospitality might say to Christian hospitality. Three Derridean themes have bearing on the way hospitality is conceived in this thesis project: alterity, moral responsibility, and eschatology.

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[38] Jacques Derrida, "Hospitality, Justice and Responsibility: A Dialogue with Jacques Derrida," in *Questioning Ethics: Contemporary Debates in Philosophy*, ed. Richard Kearney and Mark Dooley (London: Routledge, 1999), 70.

[39] For example, Nancy J. Holland offers the following critique "Derrida closes his own text to any redemptive feminist discourse on hospitality y concluding with descriptions of sexual abuse and mutilation of women that serve, he suggests, as the mark of the tradition of hospitality to which "we" might be heirs." (The stories she refers to are those of Lot and his daughters and of the Levite of Ephraim in Derrida's *Of Hospitality*.) Quote is taken from Nancy J. Holland, "With Arms Wide Open: Of Hospitality and the Most Intimate Stranger," *Philosophy Today* 45, no. 5 (2001), 134.

[40] Derrida engages and critiques traditional philosophical categories such as ontology and metaphysics, epistemology, phenomenology.

Derrida's thinking about alterity, that is "the other," is influenced by the Jewish philosopher, Emmanuel Levinas. In *Liturgy of the Neighbor*, Jeffrey Bloechl summarizes the way Levinas engages primary philosophical trajectory. "Almost without exception, Levinas makes each such engagement an occasion in which to expound the single idea of absolute primacy for the ethical relation."[41] This is precisely the influence Levinas has on Derrida: the idea of the absolute primacy of the ethics of relationality drives Derrida's conceptualization of the possibility of a pure and unconditionally offering of hospitality. Derrida's position is a response to Levinas' claim that "the alterity of the other puts me immediately under the obligation of hospitality"[42] When Levinas makes extraordinary claims like, "The Other is the poor and destitute one, and nothing which concerns this Stranger can I leave indifferent,"[43] he demands a relational ethic that is absolutely open and unconditional. It is dependent upon truly seeing the 'other' as separate and apart from our own subjectivity. A pure hospitality can never be dependent on any kind of reciprocity. When there is any expectation of reciprocity, the act of hospitality is no longer unconditional.

> Let us say yes *to who or what turns up*, before any determination, before any anticipation, before any *identification,* whether or not it has to do with a foreigner, an immigrant, an invited guest, or unexpected visitor, whether or not the new arrival is the citizen of another country, a human, animal, or divine creature, a living or dead thing, male or female.[44]

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[41] Jeffrey Bloechl, *Liturgy of the Neighbor: Emmanuel Levinas and the Religion of Responsibility* (Pittsburgh, Penn: Duquesne University Press, 2000), 5.

[42] Hans Boersma, "Irenaeus, Derrida and Hospitality: On the Eschatological Overcoming of Violence," *Modern Theology* 19, no. 2 (April 2003), 164.

[43] Emmanuel Levinas, *Emmanuel Levinas: Basic Philosophical Writings*, ed. Adriaan Peperzak, Simon Chriechley, and Robert Bernasconi (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 18.

[44] Jacques Derrida and Anne Dufourmantelle, *Of Hospitality: Anne Dufourmantelle Invites Jacques Derrida to Respond*, trans. Rachel Bowlby (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2000), 77.

There is an unreasonable, almost chaotic side to Derrida's proposal, and yet at the same time, it is arrestingly beautiful. Examples in the Christian life are the some of the saints and martyrs who believed that there was no "great love than to lay down your life for your friends," with "friends" being understood as Levinas and Derrida's "The Other." And to this Other, I owe this hospitality because, according to Levinas and Derrida, I do not exist without the Other.

Paula Keating calls "Derrida's idea of hospitality an unconditional ethic."[45] Packed into this idea of an unconditional ethic and unconditional hospitality is an "infinite moral responsibility to the other."[46] This moral responsibility sets up a task, however impossible and formidable, that determines action. "Impossible hospitality sets us a task to perform as a *morally responsive subject*."[47] While Keating understands the moral task differently than the way I have earlier described Christian hospitality as a moral practice with soteriological implications, the parallels remain consistent. Different language, different paths of reasoning, but at the core, the consensus holds: the moral project rests on our welcome to the Other.

Derrida intrinsically understands the human impossibility of what he proposes; in a sense, it is the impossibility of his idea of hospitality that makes it viable. While it is the goal that all hospitality is to be unconditional; it is the human reality that we fail before we begin, that selfishness will always hold us back, and the sure knowledge that our desire and hopes of unconditional giving will only be realized in the eschaton. It is

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[45] Paula Keating, "The Conditioning of the Unconditioned: Derrida and Kant," *Borderlands* 3, no. 1 (2004), 1.

[46] Ibid.,6.

[47] Ibid.,8.

this very tension that is our motivation. Derrida realizes that his demand of absolute hospitality lies in a messianic future[48] that always remains out of reach, but nonetheless wants to act hospitable and strive for justice. He wants to engage in the practice of hospitality today despite the conviction that he will never truly attain it."[49] Christian hospitality practitioners should share the same conviction.

Nathan Mitchell and Interconnected Differences

Nathan Mitchell says "Postmodernity isn't just about surfaces, fragmentation, isolation and bad news."[50] He dedicates much of his brilliant new book, *Meeting Mystery* to highlighting some of the positive aspects of the "postmodern condition" through the lens of liturgy and sacraments. In a clever analogy, he describes postmodernity as "crabgrass" in contrast with modernity as a "tree." "Modernity culture is part of an arboreal culture, vertical treelike structures with firm root systems, trunks and branching extensions, and is concerned about origins, foundations, ontologies, beginnings and endings-roots. Crabgrass culture is rhizomatic – a horizontal network of randomly connected root, thus a culture in constant motion, flowing, darting about in every direction at once without ever forming a coherent pattern."[51] Calling postmodernity "a culture of interconnected differences"[52] Mitchell argues that "we can understand the

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[48] Derrida does not associate the messianic future with any religion such as Judaism, Christianity and Islam. He claims that messianisms, because of the particularity of their eschatological visions, imply a conditional hospitality and hence, lead to violence. (Boersma, 165.)

[49] Ibid.,168.

[50] Mitchell, *Meeting Mystery*, 5.

[51] Ibid., 8.

[52] Ibid., 12.

richness and diversity of human experience only if we can avoid moving too quickly to generalizations – the common structures, the code, the 'universal rule' valid in 'all times and places' – and learn, instead to value the *differences*, the rhizome-like multiplicity of people, cultures, and their activities."[53] It seems to me that Mitchell's call to value the differences and multiplicity is the starting point for Christian hospitality in the postmodern world. Not that this is an easy thing to do on any level. It will involve meeting up with others in circumstances that in all probability will have a foreign dimension requiring some work on our part. And as Mitchell points out "meetings are always risky."[54] He claims the liturgy is an "action that draws us into the dynamic, hospitable, yet perilous space of God's own life."[55] Hospitality can make the same claim. It actually **must** make the same claim if it is to measure up to my initial claim that hospitality has the potential build communities with a realized eschatology. The crabgrass lawn of postmodernity, with its "random, unregulated networks darting about" is the site of hospitality in our world. To attempt to be truly hospitable amidst the "crabgrass" of postmodernity will require the ability to be flexible. To the list of qualities necessary for hospitality outlined in Chapter One; caring, compassion, graciousness, nurture, and humility, I add flexibility. Given the often chaotic circumstances created by postmodern culture – action, motion, process, fatigue - a normal reaction is to be somewhat rigid and unbending. Our anxiety drives us to hold on to the familiar. However, we risk losing too much when we are repeatedly unbending. While

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[53] Ibid., 17.

[54] Ibid., 58.

[55] Ibid., 59.

understandable, if we desire to be good stewards of hospitality, more is being asked of us. We must cultivate the practice of flexibility at the intellectual and practical levels. Intellectually, we must seek and find beauty and meaning in interconnectiveness and difference. On the practical level, openness to what comes our way is essential remaining flexible to change and to new ways of thinking and responding. When our instinct is to pull back and shrink God to fit our limitations, we must push towards flexibility. Make no mistake, this is a dangerous proposition. The more flexible we become, the more we enter into the space Mitchell describes as "the dynamic, hospitable, yet perilous space of God's own life."[56] The closer we move toward Derrida's "unconditional" hospitality," the closer we come to offering and experiencing "the utter mystery of God's mercy, compassion and presence."[57] Not that this is a grand endeavor. It is just the opposite. The utter mystery of God's mercy, compassion and presence is revealed in the ordinary. "In giving of a glass of water to a beggar" says Dorothy Day.[58] Nathan Mitchell understands this when he says, "Moreover, God's coming among us always passes through the face of the other and through the banality of the humblest gestures: dress, nourish, shelter, quench."[59]

Albert Borgmann and Communal Celebration

Albert Borgmann believes "There is, however, a way of life beyond sullenness and hyperactivity. It is a recovery of the world of eloquent things, a recovery that accepts

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[56] Ibid.

[57] Ibid., 132.

[58] Dorothy Day, "Room for Christ," *Weavings* XVIII, no. 5 (September/October 2003), 10.

[59] Mitchell, *Meeting Mystery*, 41.

the postmodern critique and realizes postmodern aspirations. I call this recovery postmodern realism and point up its emerging characteristics – focal realism, patient vigor, and communal celebration."[60] His description of "communal celebration" shares many of the characteristics of the definition of hospitality used in the thesis. He calls for "settling down in the land that has come to be ours, to give up the restless search for a hyperreal elsewhere, and to come to terms with nature and tradition in a patient and vigorous way."[61] For Borgmann, coming to terms with nature and tradition necessarily involves a sense of community, and he claims "a rich reality is needed to sponsor a sense of community."[62] The rich reality to which he refers includes a festive celebratory dimension, and a political dimension. Borgmann explains, "the final realization of public life happens not in the hyperactive elevation of the daily but in festive celebration. Such celebrations need not and could not be designed and produced. They are alive in athletics, the arts and religion."[63] I would add, that the festive dimension is alive, too, in hospitality. The same problems and issues plague Borgmann's call for the festive and for modern day hospitality – location, time, resources, and value of the project at hand. Borgmann uses the term "the heavenly city" to describe what is possible when communal celebration is part of the fabric of a community. The eschatological overtones are clear. "Here the rich are not helping the poor, they join them. These people will carry some of their enthusiasm with them to their various social stations. A community of celebration

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[60] Borgmann, 6.

[61] Ibid., 126.

[62] Ibid., 135.

[63] Ibid., 134.

radiates festivity and coherence into society."[64] Festivity and coherence is precisely what hospitality can offer the postmodern world, for if our acts of hospitality do not reveal the festive love of God for humanity, and provide coherence to our lives, then hospitality fails its noble mission. To attempt to offer God's festive love to others in hospitality requires the ability to rejoice and be joyful. Being joyful in the midst of the problems of everyday life and the suffering of the world is a challenge. The joyfulness I refer to is not the smiley face "have a nice day" mentality so prevalent in our society but a "joy that rejoices in the deepest of sorrows."[65] Recognizing the joy that rejoices in the deepest of sorrows is the great gift of bringing God's festive love to others.

Borgmann raises a significant ecclesiological question when discussing his vision of the postmodern situation. Borgmann argues that "The hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church wants to hold onto divinity while avoiding the reality and slighting community. Hence the Church is ailing at the center and surviving mainly at the periphery and in the disapora."[66] With some regret, I must agree that this is, at least in large part, where Christian hospitality will be found. This is a hard conversation to have for by and large, the dominant ecclesiology of our day does not provide a location for eschatological hospitality. The ecclesial location of hospitality will be taken up in greater detail in the following chapter. Suffice to say, that the primary location of hospitality is still the straw-filled manager and the foot of the cross.

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[64] Ibid., 143.

[65] Merton, *The Seven Storey Mountain.*

[66] Borgmann, 145.

To date in this chapter, the general themes of the intellectual movement of postmodernism were presented. These themes include a loss of confidence in reason and authority; disbelief in the idea of universal truth and grand metanarratives; suspicion about the location of power in institutions; the rejection of absolute truth and a universal ethic; and a radical reorientation of the self understood through social construction. The culture spawned by postmodernism was presented from a variety of perspectives highlighting both the negative and positive features. The crazy culture of hypermodernity was contrasted with the possibilities of a postmodern culture grounded in realism, patience and community. Different philosophical and theological perspectives on hospitality in the postmodern context were offered including Derrida's "unconditional hospitality," Mitchell's "interconnected differences" and Borgmann's "festive celebration." The moral, eschatological and ecclesial questions raised by postmodernity have been considered in some depth and hospitality has been situated in postmodernity. The next step to take these insights and consider the ways hospitality praxis can be offered in a way that is relevant to the postmodern situation.

A RENEWED PRAXIS OF HOSPITALITY IN THE POST-MODERN CONTEXT

In this thesis-project, I have sketched out a vision of Christian hospitality that can be summed up in the following way:

- Hospitality is likely occur and be found in extra-ecclesia settings on the margins and on the periphery of the Church and of society where humans - face to face, body to body, heart to heart - are Christ to one another.

- Christian hospitality will be "Gospel hospitality" through and through. Whether explicitly or implicitly, it will find its meaning, motivation, and instruction in the actions and teachings of Jesus the Christ and in the values of the Gospel.

- Hospitality is a moral practice mandated by the Gospels and every authentic act of "Gospel hospitality" is a moral act communicating that we are willing to empty ourselves in love and service to our brothers and sisters.

- Hospitality demonstrates that the deep, transformative power of God's love is incarnated and is a bridge and catalyst to social transformation at a profound level.

Thus far, this vision has been well developed and supported. It is now time to formulate a revised model for the ministry of the hospitality that takes into account the new insights and information gleaned from the research and is relevant in the post-modern situation as just described. I will approach this task in the following way. To conclude this chapter, I will suggest revising the vision of hospitality presented thus far on the basis of two concepts: a bias for the liberation of socially devalued people and a theology of accompaniment as a primary mode of praxis. In Chapter Six, I will present a case study that embodies the elements of the revised model of hospitality proposed and present a renewed praxis by outlining the plans for a workshop for ministers that incorporates the theological and practical topics in this thesis and shares strategies for a revised model of hospitality.

TWO ADDITIONAL KEY HOSPITALITY CONCEPTS

The two additional concepts I propose on which to base the model of hospitality are:

- A bias for the liberation of socially devalued people
- A theology of accompaniment as a primary mode of praxis

These two concepts are found in the work of Robert Schreiter and Roberto Goizueta. Developed in the postmodern context, these theologies both have an intensely personal focus and yet are grounded in a strong awareness of the ethical-political

dimension. I am convinced that any model of hospitality that responds to the postmodern situation must have both these elements – liberation and accompaniment - to be relevant in the postmodern situation that has just been described.

Bias for the Liberation of Socially Undervalued People

As Nathan Mitchell so aptly puts it "For Christians, ethical practices like the preferential 'option' for the poor are *not*, in fact, optional."[67] Offering hospitality, at both the personal and corporate levels is not optional either. In the affluent postmodern world that most of us negotiate daily, this includes both those who are poor and in need of food, drink, and shelter as well as those who are marginalized in society by ethnicity, sexual orientation, immigration status and other means of social stratification, as well as strangers in need of support and respite. Along with attentiveness to our family and friends, we must make a concerted and successful effort to help the millions of poor around the world whose very existence is a struggle. While we may not be able to do this directly or first hand, there are various creative ways to participate consistently in pragmatic solidarity. Financial generosity, particularly when some sacrifice is involved, is important along with working for social change. One way to be involved in this type of hospitality is through conscious involvement in the liberation of those on the margins of society. There is, of course, an ethical-political construct to this commitment just as there is in intentionally practiced hospitality. Robert Schreiter's work is helpful along these lines in explaining the roles and manifestations of this commitment.

[67] Mitchell, *Meeting Mystery*, 37.

In *Constructing Local Theologies,* Schreiter develops a liberation model that explains how to go about being involved in the liberation of others. "Liberation models analyze the lived experience of a people to uncover the forces of oppression, struggle, violence and power. They concentrate on the conflictual elements oppressing a community and tearing it apart. Liberation models concentrate on the need for change."[68] Schreiter organizes the liberation model into five tasks. The first is *resistance*. This involves the mobilization of those who are being oppressed to struggle against the sources of their oppression. The second task is *denunciation*. This involves assuming the prophetic (and often dangerous) role of identifying and condemning the source of evil and oppression. The third task is *critique*. Critique goes beyond denouncing the evil. It uncovers its ideological underpinnings and connections. The fourth task is *advocacy*. This takes the form of joining in solidarity in struggle or in the promotion of specific projects in specific areas. Advocacy helps mobilize people and resources around those projects that will move the process forward. The fifth task is *reconstruction*. Reconstruction identifies and acknowledges the kinds of change that have taken place in a situation and develops the means for new forms of cooperation.[69] The liberations of others through hospitable practices needs to be a major concern of Christians who must not forget that liberation does not just happen in far away places or to the faceless unknown. We encounter many socially undervalued people in our daily lives and we are accountable to these individuals as well.

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[68] Robert J. Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1985), 15.

[69] Robert J. Schreiter, *The New Catholicity: Theology between the Global and the Local* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1997), 110.

Another aspect of having a bias for people who are socially devalued is the ability to critically engage the concrete identity of the other. Robert Vosloo argues against an "uncritical, liberal, romantic openness towards otherness and the resulting failure to take the identity of the other seriously."[70] While we are all members of the one Body of Christ, we are not all alike. The days of segregated groupings of homogenous people spending their lives together are long gone. We are surrounded by otherness. It is most likely that we will spend much of our time with people who have different backgrounds and interpret the world very differently than we do. Refusal to recognize difference and engage the concrete identity of another will reduce hospitality to a trite and artificial encounter that takes away the possibility of genuine hospitality and social transformation. Hospitality provides a context for recognizing the worth of persons, especially those most devalued by society.

A Theology of Accompaniment

> The every day struggle for survival, the simple, seemingly insignificant acts of familial affection and care through which we affirm our life-giving relationships with our brothers, sisters and neighbors become, in the gospel, the norm for all human praxis. God is revealed first and preferentially not in grand political projects of liberation and transformation, but in the "insignificant," everyday, common struggle for survival- though this latter is always intrinsically related to the larger political and economic struggle.[71]

In *Caminemos con Jesus: Towards a Hispanic/Latino Theology of Accompaniment,* Roberto Goizueta proposes a theology of accompaniment that is a

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[70] Robert Vosloo, "Identity, Otherness and the Triune God: Theological Groundwork for a Christian Ethic of Hospitality," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 119 (July 2004), 69.

[71] Roberto S. Goizueta, *Caminemos Con Jesús: Toward a Hispanic/Latino Theology of Accompaniment* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1995), 195.

hermeneutical key to the revised vision of hospitality I am presenting. While written from Goizueta's own Hispanic/Latino background on the experiences of the Hispanic community, his work is significant and applicable to the topic at hand. Goizueta writes about "a domestic, urban theology of accompaniment" and the idea of "walking with" others with a clear, though not exclusive, bias for socially undervalued people with the preferential option for the poor grounding his work.[72] Three of the insights Goizueta develops in his theology of accompaniment can direct the mechanics of a ministry of hospitality. The first point addresses particularity and affectivity in terms of relationships. The second point deals with the spatial and geographic dimension of accompaniment, and the third addresses the necessity of justice and equality in the accompaniment process and the larger ethical-political circumstances in which accompaniment takes place.

To Walk With Another

Goizueta's theology of accompaniment calls for a deeply personal, highly relational praxis. It does not and cannot occur at arm's length or in a distant way. The concept of accompaniment really does argue against the postmodern idea of an autonomous self. Accompanying another involves giving oneself over to a much larger reality than the narrowness of self involvement. "To accompany another person is to walk with him or her. It is, above all, by walking with others that we relate to them and love them. This notion now further specifies the act of accompaniment: the paradigmatic form of human action is not simply that of 'being with' another but rather, the act of

[72] Ibid., 192.

'walking with' the other."[73] There is a big difference between "being with" and "walking with." When we walk with someone we encounter them differently –in their otherness and as they are - and we are influenced and changed by the encounter. Our "walking with" another communicates solidarity and trustworthiness. If we actually understand what we are doing when we walk with another being Christ to one another, then we are not following Jesus. He is not ahead of us or behind us, but right there with us, arms linked together, in our relationships, in the coming and goings of our lives. Nothing that we do while walking with another is insignificant, for God is revealed in each and every step. Goizueta believes that the" act of walking with others is always a fundamentally religious, sacramental act."[74] If this is the case, then accompaniment is a revelatory experience filled with grace, mystery, and intimacy – and "the universal is mediated by the particular."[75]

The affective dimension of accompaniment, however, only exists in particularity, that is, in particular relationships and in concrete circumstances. Neither accompaniment nor hospitality fully exists as an idea or a metaphor; they exist only in concrete physical acts. "The *locus* of theology is the *physical, spatial, geographic* place of theological reflection. To walk with Jesus and with the poor is to walk *where* Jesus walks and *where* the poor walk."[76] I remember once reading that when Catherine de Hueck Doherty was founding Friendship House, she made the comment that if Our Lady were to follow her usual custom she would most likely appear far from where the wealthy and powerful

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[73] Ibid., 206.

[74] Ibid., 209.

[75] Ibid., 195. Author's italics.

[76] Ibid., 191.

gather. She would appear rather in Harlem, or in some share-croppers cabin in Alabama, or in a miner's shack in Pennsylvania.[77] If we are never in a place where Our Lady might appear, we might want to take a look at the locations we frequent. Goizueta explains it this way. "To say that God is preferentially identified with the least significant persons is to say that God will be found in the least significant places, the least cultivated places, not between well-trimmed hedges but among the scattered seeds and rampant weeds."[78]

The recognition factor in hospitality that Christina Pohl describes supports the idea of particularity and relationality. She makes the point that "recognition and respect cannot be sustained at the level of abstract claims or commitments. To have any meaning, they must be lived out in concrete everyday relations – in the family, church, community and political sphere."[79] This move to the ethical-political sphere moves the idea of hospitality from tame dinner parties among like-minded people to a different realm where God's insistent plea for justice is the main course.

The role of physical space cannot be ignored or dismissed in the provision of hospitality. "A theology of accompaniment takes seriously the significance of place and space for theological reflection."[80] We cannot accompany others without a physical location to do so. This physical location must be a place where trust is possible and where isolation and distance do not create exclusion and oppression. "As concrete persons, the poor are encountered, first and foremost, in the home, in the arena of

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[77] Story referenced in Merton's *The Seven Storey Mountain*, (Garden City: Image Books, 1970). 421.

[78] Goizueta, 202-203.

[79] Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition*, 63.

[80] Goizueta, 191.

interpersonal, domestic life; in our family relationships and our friendships."[81] The same is true for the praxis of hospitality. It is a concrete experience that happens in ordinary circumstances on the personal level.

While Goizueta's theology of accompaniment is centered in the domestic or private sphere, and in the arena of family, home and friendship, he does not do so at the expense of the public sphere. He claims that the ethical-political struggle for justice is also essential. He argues against reducing accompaniment to social justice without particular relationality. Essentially, you cannot accompany an unknown crowd – only individuals to whom you are related on a personal level. "Where the option for the poor is simply reduced to an option for social justice, the poor will inevitable be reduced to an abstract concept or manipulable object."[82] In fact, he believes that the act of accompaniment that is not particular and affective will not bring about justice and equality and, in the end, will just bring about more oppression. "The act of accompaniment necessarily implies equality, the possibility of accompanying the poor does not exist unless and until the poor themselves are equal participants in dialogue and interaction.[83] Goizueta describes the way efforts like this can easily go astray and decline into patronization. "In the absence of the particular friendships that require, as a precondition, physical and affective presence, the option for the poor inevitably turns the concrete, the particular lives of poor persons into an abstract generality (e.g., "the poor," "the people," "the proletariat"). Without the empathy (aesthetic praxis) that can be

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[81] Ibid., 192.

[82] Ibid., 194.

[83] Ibid.

mediated on by the historical act of accompaniment, human ethical-political praxis inevitably degenerates into poiesis."[84] Goizueta does not put the private and public sphere in tension with each other or over one another or above one another but recognizes the corresponding role of each in the process of accompaniment.

Accompaniment and Hope

Entering into divine life is impossible unless we also enter into a life of love and communion with others.[85]

Goizueta claims that "God will transform us and liberate us all – if we but walk together."[86] How liberated and transformed am I by the hospitality I practice? Am I a person who accompanies, who "walks with" another in solidarity and hospitality? Am I a hope giver? I used to like to tell my father that he was an "eschatologist" – that is, a hope giver - for he had the ability to transform grim situations into hopeful situations by walking with others. His accompanying presence, and if need be, his practical assistance as a form of accompaniment was freely and consistently given without concern for reciprocity, recognition or personal advancement. Whom do I accompany? To whom am I an eschatologist? Does your hospitality praxis result in social transformation? Do the people I "hospitality with" have a sense the Kingdom is at hand? These are not simple or easy questions to answer. They are complex and laden with theological meaning, socio-political implications and practical demands. They strike at the heart of one's values, commitment of time and resources. These questions influence all the facets

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[84] Ibid., 207.

[85] Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1991), 382.

[86] Goizueta, 210 -211.

of a human life – intellectual, spiritual, relational, ethical, political, psychological, physical and institutional. Nonetheless, we come to the moral practice of accompaniment in Christ through the Spirit with the sure knowledge that our salvation hinges on our unconditional commitment to "walk with" the people in the communities of our lives.

CHAPTER 6

TOWARDS A MINISTRY OF COMPASSIONATE HOSPITALITY

INTRODUCTION

In the last five chapters, I have engaged the first three sub-movements of Don Browning's practical theological method - descriptive, historical and systematic – and presented the topic of hospitality using a variety of topics and perspectives. It is now time to move to the final phase, which Browning calls 'strategic' and completes the "encompassing discipline called *fundamental practical theology*."[1] In this phase suggestions are made to concretize the vision and elements of renewed praxis of "church disciplines."[2] How can church disciplines be engaged in the formulation of a renewed praxis of hospitality? What concrete suggestions can be offered that will meet my stated goal of this thesis-project: the renewal and re-imaging of the ministry of hospitality? How do I go about sharing these suggestions with the ministerial community? I will address these questions in two ways. First, I will present a case study that is an outstanding representation of the vision of hospitality I have proposed, the *Accompagnateur* Program at Partners In Health. Following the case study, I will present a model for a workshop on the ministry of Christian hospitality entitled "The Universal Call to Hospitality: Christ to One Another." Geared to a target audience of professional

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[1] Browning, 8.

[2] Ibid. "Church disciplines" are understood as the classical, practical theological disciplines and ministries such as religious education, pastoral care, homiletics, liturgy, social outreach and service.

and non-professional ministers,[3] this workshop is appropriate for setting such as a targeted group with in a parish or at a Catholic University. It could easily be adapted for a type of group with a specifically Christian (usually Roman Catholic) orientation, such as a religious congregation that has an interest in the role of hospitality in the Christian life. This case study and the proposed workshop should together give a clear picture of a model of Christian hospitality that is useful and relevant in the contemporary world.

CHRIST TO ONE ANOTHER: THE *ACCOMPAGNATEUR* PROGRAM AT PARTNERS IN HEALTH

This vision of hospitality sketched out is Chapter Five is certainly beautiful, worthy and ambitious, but is it possible? Is it practical? Can this vision actually be translated into practice? Yes, this vision of hospitality does indeed exist in multiple locations around the world. I will now describe and offer a theological reflection on this creative and shining example of Gospel hospitality, Partners In Health's *Accompagnateur* program.

As is apparent, I will be using an explicitly Christian interpretation in my work for I am self-consciously Roman Catholic and it is the tradition in which I am versed and trained. Because Partners in Health is a not-for-profit, non-governmental organization and not a specifically religious organization, I think it appropriate to comment on my interest in the theological aspects of their work and the method I will be using in my theological inquiry. My methodology is a revisionist one, along the lines of David Tracy's "critical correlation." Tracy's thesis is that the two principle sources for theology

[3] The designation "non-professional" minister refers to an individual who lives a highly intentional Christian life and understands ministry as a way of life.

are Christian "texts" and common human experience and language. He claims that the contemporary theological task involves a critical correlation of the investigation of these two sources using a historical and hermeneutical approach. He understands the "texts" to include the major expressions of the Christian tradition while recognizing that human experience and language have a religious dimension.[4] The correlation that I am undertaking involves the "texts" of Christian theology being brought into "discussion" with the religious dimension of the discipline of social medicine and in particular, the work of the Partners In Health organization at the macro level. I do not have, nor have I sought to obtain, and information about the specific religious beliefs, practices or traditions of the staff or patients, and the religious orientation (or lack thereof) of any individual is not a consideration. Nor am I suggesting that any of those involved in any aspect of PIH share similar religious viewpoints or experiences. While many individuals associated with Partners In Health have an overtly religious sensibility and use religious concepts and themes to conceive their efforts, and therefore will understand my theological interest in their work, I am aware that some in the Partners In Health organization and beyond might find the attempt to theologize and use Christian categories to interpret this topic dissident or even inappropriate. If this should be the case, I beg your indulgence and ask for a hermeneutic of generosity in understanding my intention which is to draw attention to a truly remarkable example of the human community at its best.

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[4] See *Blessed Rage for Order: The New Pluralism in Theology* (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), pages 43 – 45 for a full discussion of the critical correlation methodology.

Background Information

> Thanks to Partners In Health and the medication they give me everyday, I am alive. I have a different life, but it is a life, nevertheless, and I will protect the rest of the days I have been given, thanks to God, and thanks to Partners In Health. The only way I would be scared would be if Partners In Health did not exist. As long as they are here I am alive, I will have hope, and as long as I have hope, I will continue to spread this message.[5]
>
> Denizard Wilson
> Thomonde, Haiti

Partners In Health was founded in 1987 to support a variety of medical and social activities in Cange, Haiti, one of the poorest areas in the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. In the four years preceding the founding of PIH, Paul Farmer and Ophelia Dahl worked in Cange developing a community-based health project. As the project grew, so did the need for funding and infrastructure. Joining forces with Thomas J. White, Todd McCormack and Jim Yong Kim, Paul and Ophelia founded a non-governmental 501(c)3 charitable organization to support the work they had begun in Haiti. Based in Boston,[6] with strong ties to Harvard Medical School, Partners In Health has been from its inception, an organization of exceptional integrity and outstanding accomplishment. Through service, training, advocacy and research, PIH's effective strategies and just plain hard work have changed the way medicine is delivered to the poor and saved and improved countless numbers of lives.[7] PIHer's, as the staff and

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[5] *Denizard Wilson, "Maladi Pa Tonbe Sou Pyebwa, Se Sou Moun Li Tombe*, This Sickness Does Not Fall on Trees," *Global Aids Link* (2006).

[6] I use the term "based in Boston" reluctantly for it is often said the Partners In Health is more of an idea than a physical location and where PIH is located where ever PIH'ers are.

[7] The reader is referred to the Partners In Health website, www.pih.org for further information about this fine organization, and to Tracy Kidder's best-selling book, *Mountains Beyond Mountains* (New York: Random House, 2003) which chronicles the founding of PIH and the work of PIH co-founder, Dr. Paul Farmer.

volunteers affiliated with the organization are called, are fearless advocates willing to confront a global health crisis proclaiming "The numbers are mind-numbing, the depth of human suffering unfathomable, the failure of human compassion and solidarity unforgivable."[8] And they work tirelessly to prove their firm conviction that it doesn't have to be that way.

Experts in the treatment of deadly infectious diseases including tuberculosis and multi-drug resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB), malaria and HIV/AIDS, Partners In Health is an unrelenting and effective advocate for quality health care as a human right. PIH has experienced significant growth since it was founded eighteen years ago and enjoys a well earned reputation as leaders in the field of global health equity. They have partnered with such notables as the Gates Foundation and the Clinton HIV/AIDS Initiative on both direct service projects and influencing the direction of health care policy. It often crosses my mind that the Gates Foundation and the Clinton Initiative needs PIH more than PIH needs them – although PIH would be quick to modestly refute this assumption. With programs in eight countries including Haiti, Peru, Russia, Mexico, Guatemala, Rwanda, Lesotho and the United States, over two million people receive some type of free medical treatment and a range of other social services including food and water. With 67% percent of their operating budget coming from charitable contributions[9] and a proposed 2007 annual budget of around $45 million dollars, the cost/value relationship is extraordinary.

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[8] *Annual Report for Partners in Health* (Boston, MA, 2006), 10.

[9] Based on figures provided in the 2005 Annual Report.

Philosophically speaking, PIH is keenly aware that their work must address "the social forces beyond the control of their patients."[10] Bravely they call attention to the social arrangements that contribute to the root causes of poverty and health inequities. "From its earliest years, Partners In Health has insisted that pandemics of disease and poverty cannot be conquered without challenging the growing inequities between rich and poor" and unmask the ideologies that suggest that "what had been considered a fatal and 'untreatable' disease is untreatable because of the poverty of the patients."[11] Building on the work of liberation theologians, they name "structural violence" as one way of explaining why certain groups of people do not have access to the goods that make a humane life possible – the basic necessities of housing, food, health care, education and physical safety and the rights that the rich take for granted including political power, economic stability, employment opportunities and legal protection. The way in which PIH insists on calling attention to the root causes of poverty and health inequity makes real Roberto Goizueta's insight that "To turn a deaf ear to the cries of the poor is implicitly to identify God's voice with that of the status quo and, hence, its established power structures. To hide their suffering and struggles is thus to make faith in a transcendent God impossible."[12] In Partners In Health's refusal to hide the suffering of the world's poor they reveal God's presence in our broken world.

Writing in an article on structural violence and clinical medicine, Dr. Farmer and his colleagues note that "too much conventional international health education shrinks

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[10] Paul Farmer and others, "Structural Violence and Clinical Medicine," in *PLoS Medicine* (October 2006), 1.

[11] David A. Walton and others, "Integrated HIV Prevention and Care Strengthen Primary Health Care: Lessons from Rural Haiti," *Journal of Public Health* 2 (2004), 152.

[12] Goizueta, 177.

from acknowledging the social roots of grotesque inequities."[13] PIH's investment in social analysis makes their organization an outstanding example of Schrieter's liberation model described in Chapter Five. The five steps – resistance, denunciation, critique, advocacy and reconstruction – are a way of life for Partners In Health. The centrality of the *Accompagnateur* program in accomplishing these five tasks will become clear.

As an organization, Partners In Health has a decidedly prophetic edge. Looking at the ethos and work of PIH it is easy to grasp what Robert Schreiter means by his interesting question, "Is it not the voice of the prophet and the praxis of the prophetic community all we need?"[14] He ultimately argues that the theological task does have a critical role in expanding prophetic insight in order to engage a full range of issues and that "prophecy is often the beginning of theology."[15] In drawing attention to these aspects, I am highlighting my contention that hospitality has a socio-political dimension. This reinforces my claim that hospitality is not an optional add-on in the Christian life but a mandated moral practice. At PIH, the community takes unconditional preference over an individualistic worldview.

Partners In Health Mission Statement

To describe and interpret the *Accompagnateur* program, it is necessary to begin with the PIH Mission Statement.

> Our mission is to provide a preferential option for the poor in health care. By establishing long-term relationships with sister organizations based in

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[13] Paul Farmer, Jennifer Furin, and Joel Katz, "Education and Practice: Global Health Equity," *The Lancet* 363 (May 29, 2004), 1832.

[14] Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies*, 18.

[15] Ibid., 19.

> settings of poverty, Partners in Health strives to achieve two overarching goals: to bring the benefits of modern medical science to those most in need of them and to serve as an antidote to despair. We draw on the resources of the world's leading medical and academic institutions and on the lived experiences of the world's poorest and sickest communities. At its root, our mission is both medical and moral. It is based on solidarity rather than charity alone. When our patients are ill and have no access to care, our team of health professionals, scholars and activists will do whatever it takes to make them well – just as we would do if a member of our own families or we ourselves were ill.[16]

Although PIH is a secular organization, its mission statement surely could have been written by a practical theologian! The PIH Mission Statement explains why their work is an excellent source for theological reflection for as Goizueta points out "God is present preferentially among to poor, we can only know God if we place ourselves there also. The option for the poor is, then, the most important epistemological precondition for Christian faith; to know God we must first opt for the poor."[17] Beginning with the reference to liberation theology's "preferential option for the poor," the PIH mission statement is in keeping with many of the key points in this thesis including the moral emphasis, "At its root, our mission is both medical and moral," and the eschatological overtones in naming one of their overarching goals "an antidote to despair." Praxis oriented by "bringing the benefits of modern medical science to those most in need of them," PIH continues to critically reflects on their actions. The acknowledgement of the experience of the community as locus for knowledge is a basic tenet of practical theology, as is the interdisciplinary approach calling on the skills of leading health professionals, scholars and activists for they know that the poor deserve the very best.

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[16] *Annual Report for Partners in Health*, 5.

[17] Goizueta, 177.

And surely Jacques Derrida would approve of the unconditional stance in "whatever it takes."

Fundamental Principles

The five fundamental principles that guide PIH's efforts are:

- Access to primary health care
- Free health care and education for the poor
- **Community partnerships**
- Addressing basic and social and economic needs
- Serving the poor through the public sector

The *Accompagnateur* program I am proposing as a model of hospitality is the cornerstone of PIH's third guiding principle: community partnerships. In the 2006 Annual Report, PIH describes the focus on community development in this way:

> A key to success for PIH has been our ability to forge strong partnerships, both with sister organizations of local health care providers and with the patients and the poor communities we serve. Community members are engaged as full-fledged partners at all levels and phases of our health and socioeconomic interventions. PIH doesn't tell the communities we serve what we need. They tell us. Then they work with us to plan, implement and evaluate programs to meet those needs.[18]

The PIH model of care is comprehensive because experience has taught them that it is impossible to deliver health care to people who are hungry, thirsty and homeless and thus their approach addresses these needs along with education and other related assistance – always in response to the lived experience, hopes and aspirations of the community.

[18] *Annual Report for Partners in Health*, 8.

Silence, Complicity and Solidarity

One PIH project clearly illustrates this commitment is to the lived experience of the community. Since 1998, PIH has been working with families in three communities in the Huehuetenango region of Guatemala to exhume, identify and rebury thousands and thousands[19] of people who were brutally murdered by state-sponsored death squads. The way this came to be is described by Paul Farmer in *Pathologies of Power*. He and Ophelia Dahl and a group of co-workers have crossed the border between Mexico into Guatemala making their way to the town of Huehuetenango to meeting with a group of local people, survivors of the military genocide that killed many family members, destroyed lives and displaced many in refugee camps, some for as long as ten years. Finally returning home to rebuild their communities, they were meeting with representatives of Partners In Health to discuss the possibility of a community health project. I believe the text in worth citing in some detail as it gives a clear sense of just how authentically Partners In Health lives out their Mission and Principles.

> The next hour was bracing. The air, thick with smoke from the fires bubbling under two cauldrons, was electric; and the discussion had a rare clarity, as Julia and the small group of survivors laid out their plans. They wanted to continue the work they'd begun before the war: promotion of community health through training, education, and service. And the project they wanted our help with was a mental health project for which they had despaired of securing funding.
>
> They wanted to exhume the dead. They wanted to locate and disinter those buried in mass graves by the army. Why? Because the victims had been "buried with their eyes open." And neither they nor their kin would know peace until they were buried properly. "So that their eyes may close," explained Miguel, who along with Julia, spoke as their leader.

[19] Estimates of the number of people in these horrible war crimes killed vary widely – one estimate puts the numbers as high as two hundred thousand. A distinction has also been made been those killed and those that "disappeared" (to the same fatal end). See footnote on page 257 of *Pathologies of Power,* footnote for an in-depth discussion of this topic.

> My own eyes were stinging, but not from the smoke. Again, a silence fell over us, this time a silence of complicity and solidarity. Ophelia spoke first, saying that we who would never know their suffering would try to do our part, and also that we would bear witness in the hope that such crimes could not be so readily committed in the future. [20]

Working in concert a local organization, *Equipo Técnico de Educación en Salud Comunitaria* (ETESC), which is always the PIH way, this effort is what Robert Schreiter names as the work of reconciliation. He understands the process of reconciliation as both spiritual and strategic. Reconciliation is "not about going back. It is about addressing the past adequately so that we can go forward."[21] This is what Julia and Miguel and the Guatemalan community so poignantly requested. They begged for the creation of what Schreiber calls "community of memories, safe places to explore and untangle a painful past, and the cultivation of truth-telling to overcome to the lies of injustice and wrongdoing." When a 'silence of complicity and solidarity' washed over Paul Farmer and Ophelia Dahl, a new community of hope was created "where a new future might be imagined and celebrated."[22] In this situation, the extraordinary strength of Partners In Health comes from both their intuition of the spiritual possibility of reconciliation and their willingness to concretize and commit to strategies that will allow true reconciliation to occur. PIH continues to be a presence in the highland communities in Guatemala where they work closely with the local communities on the exhumation projects.

This approach is far different than many other charitable organizations that do similar health care work but do not seriously engage the local community or make a long

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[20] Farmer, *Pathologies of Power: Health, Human Rights, and the New War on the Poor: With a New Preface by the Author*, 4.

[21] Robert J. Schreiter, *The Ministry of Reconciliation: Spirituality and Strategies* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1998), 18.

[22] Ibid., 17.

term commitment to the area. It is these two points; community engagement and long-term presence that sets PIH apart and makes their work so successful, and an excellent source for theological reflection.

The PIH Model

At this juncture, it is helpful to provide background information in two areas. First, a brief introduction to the larger context in which Partners In Health and the *Accompagnateur* program operate, and secondly, some discipline specific terminology that one must be familiar with to understand the specifics of the *Accompagnateur* program.

A few of the key issues in the field global public health are germane to understanding the context and climate in which the *Accompagnateur* program exists. Writing in an article on community based treatment of HIV disease; PIH staff members explain some of these issues:

> In the arena of public health, the supposed conflict between the prevention and treatment has dominated discussion about AIDS. It is argued that, in a setting of limited resources, either prevention or treatment must be prioritized. Policy debates about AIDS are also marked by disputes about resource allocation: between the development, the vaccination of children, or the treatment of TB on the one hand and the treatment of AIDS on the other. Perhaps the two most significant objections to treating HIV disease with HAART are the high costs of antiretroviral medications and the lack of infrastructure capable of delivering the therapy in poor countries. As financial barriers have fallen, the response to a potential increase in access has added more objections to the treatment of AIDS with HAART, including those of unfeasibility and patient non-compliance.[23]

[23] Paul Farmer and others, "Community-Based Treatment of Advanced HIV Disease: Introducing Dot-HAART (Directly Observed Therapy with Highly Active Antiretroviral Therapy)," *Bulletin of the World Health Organization* 79, no. 12 (2001), 1146.

Arguments about prevention versus treatment, the allocation of limited resources, high costs of drugs, and the lack of infrastructure are just a few of the positions advanced that keep the poorest people in the world from receiving the medical treatment that the rich claim as a birthright. But perhaps the most egregious argument is the objection and concern about "feasibility" and non-compliance." In other words, because you cannot pay for the treatment that would save your life, because you are poor and don't have a decent house to live in, or enough food to fend off malnutrition, and no reliable means of transportation to go to a doctor appointment or pick up you medications, you are, to use the popular vernacular, "screwed." Because you have to swallow the medication you walked five hours to get with tainted water, because you don't even have a clock to see when it is time to take your medication, because you don't have anyone to help you scavenge food for your hungry children and your husband died from lack of medical care for a treatable disease, you are deemed non-compliant. Sorry, providing medical care to you and yours is not feasible. Partners In Health forcefully challenges this oppressive line of reasoning, "Compliance is an analytically flimsy concept in countries like Haiti, where the poor are systematically put at risk for TB and then denied access to adequate care. All too often, the notion of patient noncompliance is used as a means of explaining program failure."[24] Instead of searching for "better" patients, PIH creates aggressive community based programs to identify the many barriers to effective treatment of TB, and later HIV/AIDS. "When hunger and poverty are the prime culprits in treatment failure"[25] we all bear the shame.

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[24] Paul Farmer and others, "Tuberculosis, Poverty and 'Compliance': Lessons from Rural Haiti," *Seminars in Respiratory Infections* 6, no. 4 (December 1991), 259.

[25] Ibid., 258.

As far as terminology, DOTS, DOTS-Plus, and HAART are acronyms used in the treatment and administration of drug therapy. DOTS stands for "directly observed therapies," that is, the observation of the ingestion of medication. "Widespread implementation of DOT in resource-poor settings has been shown to be cost-effective in bringing about improved patient outcomes."[26] DOTS-Plus refers to DOTS enhanced by social services and support. Both of DOTS and DOTS-Plus are used extensively to treat tuberculosis. HAART stands for "highly active antiretroviral therapy," an aggressive combination of drugs that has reduced AIDS mortality significantly in North America and Europe. DOTS-HAART refers to when "directly observed therapy" is used for HIV/AIDS treatment. These programs are the core treatment strategy of PIH's extremely successful outcomes. "A decade of experience with a successful community-based DOTS programs and the fact that the AIDS and tuberculosis epidemics overlapped substantially, led our Haiti team to decide in 1998 to deliver AIDS care via the same model used to treat tuberculosis: 'DOTS' became 'DOT-HAART' as village health care workers used antiretroviral therapy rather than or in addition to antituberculous drugs."[27]

While I will leave the telling of clinical success of this health care model to the medical experts,[28] I note that the results have been named the "Lazarus effect" by the

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[26] Sonya Shin and others, "Community-Based Treatment of Multi-Resistant Tuberculosis in Lima, Peru: 7 Years of Experience," *Social Science and Medicine* no. 59 (2004), 1529.

[27] Walton and others, 142.

[28] See the following articles for information on medical outcomes: Paul Farmer, Jennifer Furin, and Joel Katz, "Education and Practice: Global Health Equity." *The Lancet* 363 (May 29, 2004): 1832; Paul Farmer, Fernet Léandre, Joia S. Mukherjee, Marie Sidonise Claude, Patrice Nevil, Mary C. Smith-Fawzi, Serena P. Koenig, Arachu Castro, Mercedes C. Becerra, Jeffrey Sachs, Amir Attaran, and Jim Yong Kim, "Community-Based Approaches to HIV Treatment in Resource-Poor Settings." *The Lancet* 358 (August 4, 2001): 404-409; Paul Farmer, Fernet Léandre, Joia Mukherjee, Rajesh Gupta, Laura Tarter, and Jim Yong Kim, "Community-Based Treatment of Advanced HIV Disease: Introducing DOT-HAART (Directly Observed Therapy with Highly Active Antiretroviral Therapy)." *Bulletin of the World Health Organization* 79, no. 12 (2001): 1145-1151.

local community because of the large number of equally dramatic clinical responses to antiretroviral therapy and a sharp decline in AIDS-related stigma.[29] The reference to Lazarus, of course, refers to the story in John's Gospel where Jesus rolls back the stone at the cave where Lazarus is buried and raises his friend from the dead. "Lazarus, come out! The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, 'Unbind him, and let him go'" (John 11:43-44). Images I have seen of people before and after their DOT-HAART therapy do look as if, and indeed, they have been raised from the dead because of the efforts of a relatively small group of people who are committed to a model that that truly has a preferential option for the poor. The PIH way is the exact opposite of colonialism. Free of domination, PIH is able to actualize Goizueta claim that "Before there can be authentic pluralism there must be authentic justice, and consequently, the preferential option for the poor is a necessary precondition for authentic pluralism."[30] This rare and highly desirable condition is one to be closely observed and emulated.

The PIH model is a simple one. "Clinical and community barriers to care are removed as diagnosis and treatment are declared a public good and made available free of charge to patients living in poverty. Furthermore, AIDS care is delivered not only in the conventional way at the clinic, but also within the villages in which our patients live and work."[31] The great majority of the care for the tuberculosis and AIDS treatment is provided by *accompagnateurs* proving that the most vulnerable people in the world are

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[29] Walton and others, 142.

[30] Goizueta, 173.

[31] Farmer and others, "Structural Violence and Clinical Medicine," 3.

not "non-compliant," indeed, they are quite compliant once they have hope, medication and some on-going supports – three commodities that those who suggest the poor are non-compliant can't even imagine being without.

Accompagnateurs: Hospitality in Action

> In the cool mist of daybreak, hundreds of villagers fanned out across the forsaken reaches of this nation's remote interior, fording rivers swollen by torrential rains, slogging through muddy cornfields and clambering up slippery mountainsides to reach people sickened by AIDS.[32]

Accompagnateur, from the French word meaning "to accompany," is a term coined by Partners In Health to describe an individual who accompanies another while they are receiving medical treatment, usually for a life-threatening condition such as tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS or both. Sometimes called a "community health worker" there is a subtle but important difference between a PIH *accompagnateur* and a community health worker which is a more generic term used in the health care field to designate an individual who works with patients in the community on health related issues. While fulfilling many of the same functions as a community health worker, *accompagnateurs* go beyond just the delivery of medical care. They do just what the job title suggests – they accompany another on an intimate journey that involves what is most personal – family, children, health, sustenance, daily existence – and what is most universal - pain and suffering, fears and hopes. To "walk with" is not just a metaphor is the case of the *accompagnateur* for few have transportation other than their own two feet or perhaps a donkey or bike. Writing in article in *The New York Times* entitled "Rural Haitians are

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[32] Celia Dugger, "Rural Haitians Are Vanguard in AIDS Battle," *The New York Times* 30 November 2003, 1.

Vanguard in AIDS Battle" Celia Dugger describes the "walking with" occurring in Cange, Haiti. "It is the rainy season now. So each morning and evening, 700[33] villagers strike out across dirt roads turned into a morass of mud and dung to deliver medicines to the people with AIDS and tuberculosis. They tramp through muck and wade through streams on food; a lucky few sit atop mules or donkeys."[34] Accompaniment is "first of all, a concrete, physical, historical act. The act of walking implies directionality: one walks in a particular direction." And this direction, which Goizueta names as "ethical-political,"[35] finds its concrete expression in daily actions in a group of Haitian peasants. It seems the Haitian peasants are on the "vanguard" of Christian praxis too.

On the medical side, a*ccompagnateurs* are a vital link between the village and the clinic and help to attend to the pressing social problems that those they are walking with face. They are the coordinating link between the patient and family, social worker, infectious disease team and pharmacy. Providing, the majority of care, *accompagnateurs* receive training in areas including the clinical presentation and management of HIV infection and tuberculosis, the proper use of medications, management of side effects, and prevention of HIV, and how to provide emotional support and the importance of confidentiality.[36] *Accompagnateurs* do more than observe ingestion of therapy. "Their presence in the community helps renew faith in the health care system, stimulate attention

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[33] This article was written in 2003 – there are more than three times as many *accompagnateurs* in Haiti now.

[34] Dugger, 1.

[35] Goizueta, 206.

[36] H.L. Behforouz, P.E. Farmer, and J.S. Mukherjee, "From Directly Observed Therapy to *Accompagnateurs:* Enhancing AIDS Treatment Outcomes in Haiti and in Boston," *Clinical Infectious Diseases* 38, no. Supplement 5 (2004), 431.

to and demand for primary health care, reduce the stigmas of HIV testing and treatment, enhance interest in prevention efforts, and involve local residents in the promotion and provision of health."[37] For their service, they are paid a small stipend (for example, about five hundred dollars a year in Haiti) which is entirely just considering the socio-economic conditions of the local community.

Accompagnateur as Hope Giver

> Margareth Guerrier, wearing a jaunty, broad-brimmed hat, set out on a recent morning from her small concrete house, treading her way past squatters' shacks up a steep, treacherously slick mountain.
>
> At the top, she stopped at a small house and took the AIDS medicines from a black case slung over her shoulder. A 9 year-old girl named Fanise, ready for school in a navy dress, swallowed her pills dutifully as her grandmother looked on.[38]

Accompagnateurs are usually local members of the community. For example, in Haiti, they are usually peasant farmers or market women. About fifty percent are women, an important fact as issues related to gender equality are significant. A wonderful feature of the program is that the patients can select the *accompagnateur* of their choice – it might be a family member, or a friend, or someone they know in their community. If a patient does not have a specific request, an *accompagnateur* on staff is assigned. Being an *accompagnateur* is more a way of life than a job. On the professional side, they are the intermediary between the patient and the clinic, faithful providers of medication, and assist in procuring other social supports such as food, transportation, water and other basic necessities. But the heart of the job and what makes

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[37] Walton and others.

[38] Dugger, 1.

an *accompagnateur* different from a community health worker is the way in which they are integrated into the lives of those they accompany beyond just delivery of medical care. Aside from practical assistance on many levels (which should never be discounted) *accompagnateurs* are respected in their home communities and serve as the essential link between the villages and the clinic. Described as "trusted friend, servant of the community, reliable, credible, responsible, compassionate, and essential for survival, an *accompagnateur* cares about the dignity of the people and solidarity." [39] It in simplicity, constancy, reliable presence, and compassionate outreach, the *Accompagnateur* program models a hospitality that is pleasing to God.

Today Salvation Has Come to This House

> At each home, they handed out little white pills that have brought their neighbors, wasted by the disease, back to robust life.[40]

The social location of the *Accompagnateur* program is the home. Most *accompagnateurs* go to the homes of the people they are accompanying every single day to watch them take their medication and to see how they are feeling and how they are faring in other ways. The primary location for the work of *accompagnateurs* is the private sphere, in the home, a significant site for hospitality and a privileged place for theological reflection. Goizueta is correct when he argues that "the home and the barrio and the ghetto are privileged places for theology because these are the places where the poor – especially women, children, the elderly and the economically poor – live, die and

[39] Joia Mukherjee and Eddy Eustache, "Community Heath Workers as Cornerstone for Integrating HIV and Primary Health Care," *AIDS Care* 19, Supplement 1 (2007), 80.

[40] Dugger, 1.

struggle for survival."[41] There is nothing grand or important about the home as location for theological reflection or hospitality. Indeed, it is just the opposite. Familial affection and care is exactly what the *accompagnateurs* offer on their daily visits. The seemingly insignificant acts of entering, listening, bringing, sharing, observing, collaborating, waiting, and linking - the daily acts of accompaniment – are anything but insignificant. They are the essence of Gospel hospitality and a sure sign of the incarnational presence of the Risen Lord amongst us.

A Virtuous Social Cycle

From a theological point, and in terms of hospitality, the genius of the *Accompagnateur* program is that is blurs the line between guest and host. In part because most *accompagnateurs* are from the local area and share a history and narrative, there is equality in the relationship in either direction. The *accompagnateur* is a welcome guest in the patient's home and the patient as host has standing in the relationship. There is shared marginality and no marginality. "The Greek term used in the New Testament for hospitality, *philoxenia* refers literally not to a love of strangers per se but to the delight in the whole guest-host relationship in the mysterious reversals and gains for all parties which may take place."[42] In this New Testament concept and in the *Accompagnateur* program everyone brings gifts to the meeting but the content and treasures of these gifts are not known, even to the bearers, until they are exchanged in an atmosphere of hospitality.

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[41] Goizueta, 193.

[42] Koenig, 8.

The integrity of the program can be evaluated by its overall benefits beyond just the obvious and excellent medical improvements. "The clinical and public health literature has little to say regarding the social processes involved in 'accompanying' patients with chronic, treatable diseases. During the program review, we learned that *accompagnateurs* were sharing food with their patient-neighbors, babysitting, and running errands. Some of the *accompagnateurs* were themselves receiving antiretrovirals from their own *accompagnateurs*. Something far more complex and beneficial than DOT – 'a virtuous social cycle – occurs when neighbors are enlisted in the struggle against tuberculosis and HIV infection."[43] In the *Accompagnateur* program the poor become "liberated in the process of the struggle itself, in the process of being actively present in history as human subjects. It is in the very struggle against oppression that the poor cease to be merely objects of someone else's actions, and instead, become historical subjects in their own right."[44] This liberating praxis, whereby a person is not objectified, but rather an active participant in their own history and personal agency is deeply humanizing.

The *Accompagnateur* program has another outstanding attribute. It is portable, easy to replicate anywhere and in a variety of circumstances. "We believe that if DOT-HARRT can be implemented in the devastated Central Plateau of Haiti it can be implemented anywhere."[45] Although this approach was pioneers in rural Haiti, it was exported successfully to a slum in Peru, poor neighborhoods in Siberia and Boston, and rural villages in Rwanda. I am, of course, suggesting that through the use of the model as

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[43] Behforouz, Farmer, and Mukherjee, 432.

[44] Goizueta, 87.

[45] Paul Farmer and others, "Community-Based Approaches to HIV Treatment in Resource-Poor Settings," *The Lancet* 358 (August 4, 2001), 405.

an example, accompaniment has far reaching possibilities for application beyond medical care. If you are wondering what a group of poor people in rural Haiti and Rwanda have to do with you, my response is as follows. They have everything to do with you and with me and any attempts to distance oneself from them is tantamount to turning ones back on the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In their poverty and lack, they accompany and walk with the lonely other in a way that is a model of hospitality that gives praise and glory to God and verifies that a realized eschatology is quite possible. The gentle hospitality of the *accompagnateurs* is God's hospitality and to model it is to learn to be Christ to one another.

In closing this section, I remind you of the definition of hospitality proposed in Chapter One.

> Hospitality…
> …must be offered in an intentional and responsible way
> …is always freely offered without expectation of reciprocity
> …is mobile and can happen anywhere
> …is always grounded in praxis and involving the actions of giving and receiving
> …infuses tender mercy in the midst of the chaos of another's life
> …is a part of ordinary life and values presence over outcomes
> …finds its expression in caring, compassion, graciousness, nurture, and humility

Sounds a lot like an *accompagnateur*, doesn't it? And if the poorest people in the world can manage to fulfill the requirements of authentic hospitality and accompany each other, then surely those who live in the relative (or total) lap of luxury can do at least as well.

In this chapter, I have proposed the *Accompagnateur* program at Partners in Health as an example of hospitality in the contemporary world. It meets well the criteria of the initial and revised vision set out in this thesis. It is a combination of the secular and religious, intertwined with the local culture and yet extra-ecclesial, using religious

themes to guide praxis. It is located on the margins, on the periphery, in the modern diasporas of the world where the light of hope is shined on the darkness of poverty and suffering. With its commitment to justice, it is situated in the Judeo-Christian tradition. With its emphasis on the works of mercy, and commitment to the least among us, it is implicitly Christological. The bias for the poor and socially disenfranchised is apparent as is the lived reality of a theology of accompaniment. And there is no question that through accompaniment profound social transformation is occurring where on a daily basis, people are Christ to one another, proclaiming the reign of God's mercy and justice in an explicit and tangible way. Simply put, PIH envisions a just world and takes action to make it happen and in the doing social transformation occurs giving way to a realized eschatology. By this I mean, that God's love and mercy is experienced in the here and now. This is the core of my proposed revisionist model of hospitality – a realized eschatology where "God's life rules and in Jesus Christ, God heals divisions, reconciles the alienated, gives hope to those who have none, offers forgiveness to the sinner, includes the outcast.[46] May the images of men and women in rural Haiti, the slums of Peru, a Boston ghetto, and the villages of Rwanda making their way to the homes of their friends and neighbors – hope bearers each one stay with you and inspire you to be a hope giver too.

[46] LaCugna, 335.

A PROPOSAL FOR A WORKSHOP ON THE MINISTRY OF HOSPITALITY

At this point, it is time to present a method for sharing this vision and renewed praxis of hospitality in this thesis with other professional and non-professional ministers. To do so, I am proposing a project for a workshop on the ministry of hospitality. This workshop entitled "The Universal Call to Hospitality: Christ to One Another" will communicate the insights gleaned from the research in this thesis using a variety of pedagogical styles and offer participants specific information and direction on a model of for a model of hospitality that can be applied to ministry and daily living situations.

General Information

Target Group	Professional and non-professional Ministers[47]
Setting	Parish or Catholic University community[48]
Participants:	Limited to 25
Format:	Friday evening through Sunday early afternoon Short Pre-Workshop Reading Assignments
Space Requirements:	Classroom style meeting room, separate dining space
Other Requirements:	Catering or cook for three meals and snacks, AV including DVD and monitor, Power Point set-up

Goals of the Workshop

1. To introduce participants to the theological and pastoral concepts involved in the ministry of Christian hospitality.
2. To locate the central role of hospitality in the Scriptures and the Catholic tradition.
3. Assist the participants in a critical reflection on personal experience of hospitality.
4. Address practical matters related to the provision of hospitality including potentially difficult situations.
5. Offer a model and guidelines for practicing Christian hospitality in the post-modern situation.

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[47] The designation "non-professional" minister refers to an individual who lives a highly intentional Christian life and understands ministry as a way of life.

[48] Could easily be adapted for a group with a specifically Christian (usually Roman Catholic) orientation, such as a religious congregation.

Overview of Workshop Schedule and Topics

The Universal Call to Hospitality:
Christ to One Another

Workshop on the Ministry of Hospitality

Facilitator: Jennie Weiss Block, OP, D.Min.

SCHEDULE

FRIDAY EVENING

5:00pm	Gathering/Check-In
5:30pm	*Evening Prayer*
5:45pm	**Session One**: The Universal Call to Hospitality
7:00pm	DINNER
8:15pm	**Session Two**: Jesus as Guest and Host
9:15	Closing Comments

SATURDAY

9:00am	Gathering/*Morning Prayer*
9:30am	**Session Three**: Scripture and the Catholic Tradition Soteriology Eucharist, Meal Sharing and Justice
10:30am	Break
11:00am	**Session Four**: Reflection on an Experience of Hospitality
12:15pm	LUNCH
1:30pm	**Session Five**: Pastoral and Practical Matters
2:30pm	Break
3:00pm	**Session Six**: A Model for Hospitality in the Post-Modern Situation
4:00pm	Break
4:15	Closing Comments followed by *Evening Prayer*

SUNDAY

11am	Mass with community/Sending Forth Ritual
12:30 pm	LUNCHEON - Family members are invited in parish settings, other guests as appropriate - Short Inspiration Talk - Followed by participant sharing - Evaluation of workshop

Session Content Information

Pre-Workshop Reading Assignments

Information provided the participants 2 weeks in advance:

- "The Contours of Hospitality" (article by Jennie Weiss Block)
- Introduction from *I Was a Stranger: A Christian Theology of Hospitality* by Arthur Sutherland (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006).
- Preliminary Reflection Questions

Materials for Workshop Include:

- Outline for each Presentation by facilitator – participants can take notes on the outlines
- Bibliography for additional reading

Session One: The Universal Call to Holiness

- General Information (15 minutes)

1.1 Introductions
1.2 Review of Schedule (Handout #1)
1.3 Goals of Workshop (Handout #1)

- Christian Hospitality in the Contemporary World (40 minutes)

Format: Presentation by facilitator with PowerPoint and outline handout for each topic provided to each participant, time for questions at end

1.4 Why is Hospitality an Essential Ministry? (Handout #2)
1.5 Defining Christian Hospitality? (Handout #3)
1.6 Hospitality in the Post-Modern Context (Handout #4)

- Group Exercise (15 minutes)

1.7 Facilitator reads short personal case study as example
1.8 Participants write short case study on a personal experience of hospitality as either guest or host – can take home and continue t work on until mid-day Saturday (Handout # 5)

Session Two: Jesus as Host and Guest (1 hour)

Format: Ten minute presentation on each passage by facilitator followed by discussion (Handout # 6))

2.1 Why Does He Eat with Sinners and Tax Collectors? (Matt 9: 10-13, Luke 7:36-50)
2.2 The Risen Lord as Host (John 21:12)

Session Three: Scripture and the Catholic Tradition (A one half hour for each topic)

Format: Reading Scripture passage aloud, facilitator provides short exegesis, Followed by group discussion

Scripture

3.1 Soteriology: Today Salvation Has Come to This House
Luke 9: 1- 10 (Handout #7)

Eucharist

3.2 Eucharist, Meal Sharing and Justice (Handouts # 8 and 9)

- Scripture passage on the Multiplication of the Fishes and Loaves
- Presentation on "Meal sharing as form of Hospitality"
- Read aloud one page summary from "The Eucharist and Bread for a Hungry World: Principles and Action" in *Broken Bread and Broken Bodies: The Lord's Supper and World Hunger* by Joseph Grassi (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2005) followed by discussion

Session Four: Reflection on a Personal Experience of Hospitality (1 hour)

4.1 Presentation of Case Studies
4.2 Discussion from Reflection Questions (Handout #10)

Session Five: Pastoral and Practical Matters (1 hour)

Format: Presentation with PowerPoint discussion (Handout # 11)

5.1 Roles and Responsibilities
5.2 Boundaries, Limitations and Problems
5.3 Hospitality from the Underside

Session Six: A Model for Hospitality in the Postmodern Situation (1 hour)

Format: Video, Presentation, Discussion (Handout # 12)

6.1 Video (Ten minute clip from Partners In Health *Accompagnateur* Program or *Amor et Acion*) followed by discussion
6.2 The Works of Mercy
6.3 Accompaniment and Hope Givers
6.4 A Realized Eschatology

Session Seven: Closing Ritual and Integrated Conversation

7.1 Mass with Sending Ritual
7.2 Lunch (45 minutes)
7.3 "Christ to One Another" Inspiration Talk (15 minute)
By facilitator or other appropriate party
7.4 Sharing by Each participants (45 minutes)
Question: What Does It Mean to be Christ to one Another?
7.5 Workshop Evaluation (Handout #14)

List of Proposed Handouts

Highlighted Handouts have samples attached

PRE-WORKSHOP

Handout #A	"The Contours of Christian Hospitality" Article by Jennie Weiss Block
Handout #B	Excerpt: *I Was a Stranger: A Christian Theology of Hospitality*
Handout #C	Preliminary Reflection Questions
Handout #D	Bio of Facilitator

WORKSHOP

Handout # 1:	Review of Schedule and Goals for Workshop
Handout # 2:	Why is Hospitality an Essential Ministry?
Handout #3:	Defining Hospitality
Handout #4:	Hospitality in the Post-Modern Context
Handout #5:	Personal Case Study Worksheet (See Appendix # 2)
Handout #6:	Scripture Passages: Jesus as Host and Guest
Handout #7:	Soteriology: Today Salvation Has Come to this House
Handout #8:	Eucharist, Meal Sharing and Justice
Handout #9:	Excerpt from *Broken Bread and Broken Bodies*
Handout #10:	Reflection Questions on Case Studies
Handout #11:	Pastoral and Practical Matters: Boundaries, Limitations and Hospitality from the Underside
Handout #12	A Model for Hospitality in the Post-Modern Situation: The Works of Mercy, Accompaniment and Hope and A Realized Eschatology
Handout #13:	Annotated Bibliography
Handout #14:	Workshop Evaluation

A FEW FINAL WORDS

Jürgen Moltmann makes the claim that all Christian theology is ultimately eschatology. "From first the last, and not merely in the epilogue, Christianity is eschatology, is hope, forward looking and forward moving and therefore also revolutionizing and transforming the present."[49] Moltmann's notion of eschatology puts forth the idea that eschatology can inform and transform life in the present and is "aimed at action. It is a hermeneutic of mission. It is an attempt to clarify the responsibility of Christians in relation to the actual conditions of human life in the present."[50] Lest these references to eschatology and other grand Christian terms and themes give the impression that hospitality –the works of mercy, accompaniment and hope giving - are grand activities, I will close by reiterating what I stated in the Introduction. This is a modest proposal located in experiences of every day life, and is in large measure about ordinary activities, albeit, ones that require self-sacrifice and discipline. Most of "what it takes" to be a provider of hospitality, to accompany others as a hope giver is ordinary, unglamorous work. While most of us will not be asked to walk miles a day to make sure someone has taken their medication or bringing water and food to the hut of a person in Haiti, we certainly will be asked to do extend ourselves in tangible ways. The daily acts of accompaniment - entering, listening, bringing, sharing, observing, collaborating, waiting, weep, celebrating - are the ordinary work of hospitality and are ultimately what will bring hope to others. Practice what I call a ministry of "showing up." Lay down

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[49] Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, trans. James Leitch (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), 16.

[50] Daniel Migliore, "Biblical Eschatology and Political Hermeneutics," *Theology Today* 29 (July 1969), 123.

your life in little pieces, in daily acts of love and sacrifice all the while spreading the peace and joy the world cannot give. Nathan Mitchell describes the relationship between the Trinity (Father, Son, Spirit) as "giving themselves to one another in mutual self-surrender. To speak of the persons in God is to speak of God: given: given to, given away, given over, poured out, each person to the other in endless exchange and communion."[51] This is the final image I leave you with – "endless exchange and communion" through hospitality to your brothers and sisters. Christ to one another.

[51] Mitchell, *Meeting Mystery*, 58.

APPENDICES

Essay Guidelines

1. **The purpose of your essay is the critically reflect on the following hospitality experience that you participated in with Jennie Weiss Block.**

   This is a brief description of the event that you are being asked to reflect upon:

   Event described here

2. **A working definition of hospitality for the purpose of this essay is as follows:**

   Hospitality is essentially a moral practice that is demanded of us by the Gospel. Hospitality focuses on responses to situations in ordinary living, and usually involves the setting aside of one's own priorities and needs so as to be present to another.

   In the face of suffering and the vulnerability of life, hospitality is a sign of hope. Christian hope is made manifest when we are Christ to one another through hospitable practices.

   Christian Hospitality*....*

   ...Calls and directs all Christians, through the birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension to be Christ to one another
   ...is offered to friend, foe and strangers alike
   ...must be offered in an intentional and responsible way
   ...is always freely offered without expectation of reciprocity
   ...is mobile and can happen anywhere
   ...is always grounded in praxis and involving the actions of giving and receiving
   ...infuses tender mercy in the midst of the chaos of another's life
   ...is a part of ordinary life and values presence over outcomes
   ...finds its expression in caring, compassion, graciousness, nurture and humility

   There are six key components to an experience of hospitality:

   1) Context and motivation
   Within the Christian narrative in the midst of the secular world
   2) Personal attributes
   Intentional, responsible, compassionate, humble, generous, gracious
   3) Actions
   Attention to physical, psychological and spiritual needs
   4) Location
   Anywhere there is space and recognition
   5) Participants
   Host and guest, strangers, friends, enemies, and those who are oppressed
   6) Expected return and outcome

No expected return, outcome of social transformation

3. **In light of the above definition, please address the following information in your essay:**

    a. Describe presenting problem or situation
    b. Describe the social and/or political context in which this situation took place
    c. Describe obstacles encountered and solutions that occurred
    d. Describe the contribution of Jennie Block from the following perspectives:
        i. Practical assistance
        ii. Personal attributes
        iii. Ways in which demands of situation were fulfilled or failed to be fulfilled
    e. How did the response and participation of Jennie Block correlate to the working definition of hospitality as stated above?

4. **Your essay should be between 2 – 5 pages, double spaced. Should you require additional length, this is acceptable.**

Please feel free to add any additional information you think is pertinent and useful. Both positive and negative comments are being solicited and honesty and frankness is appreciated.

Please contact me at Jennie88@aol.com, or 305.343.0686 or my director, Dr. Gloria Schaab, gschaab@mail.barry.edu should you have questions or need further information.

Final date for submission is March 8, 2007. Essay can be sent by e-mail to Jennie88@aol.com.

Handout # 5
Workshop on the Ministry of Hospitality

Personal Case Study of Hospitality

THINK – THEN WRITE

1. Think of a hospitality event in which you participated – either as host or guest.
2. Write a one or two page description of this event.
3. Describe the following:
   - Presenting situation
   - Social/political context
   - Obstacles/Problems that occurred
   - Outcomes/Lack of outcomes
4. Comment on the six key components of hospitality presented earlier
   i. Context and motivation
   ii. Personal attributes
   iii. Actions
   iv. Location
   v. Participants
   vii. Expected return and outcomes

5. You will be asked to briefly present your hospitality event to the group for discussion.

6. Please respond to the following reflection questions.

   a) How was God present in (or absent from) this experience?
   b) Identify two key aspects of the situation, one practical and one spiritual that you would like to discuss or further consider.
   c) Is there any particular Scripture passage that comes to mind related to your hospitality event?
   d) What did you learn about hospitality, yourself and God in this experience?

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