

Brothers and Sisters, the basic theme of our today's readings is that **offering hospitality always brings a blessing from God**. Perhaps even more important than physical hospitality is simply listening to God's Messengers. Abraham's hospitality was amply rewarded: God announced to him that within a year, Sarah would have a son, thus fulfilling the promise he had made to him years before (Gen.18:10). Let us pay attention to the first reading and to how Abraham welcomed the **three visitors, three strangers**, and immediately, he seemed to be willing not only to serve them, to run and get food and drink, but also to **insist on doing it (Gen.18:3-5)**. **Little did he know that he was entertaining angels**, the scriptures say about why we should show hospitality to the visitor, and in this case of Abraham, of course, it was absolutely true.

Abraham saw three people coming towards him, and hastened to receive them with extraordinary signs of respect, bowing to the ground, and offering them the best he had: water, bread, milk, curds and meat (Gen. 18:2-8). Abraham and Sarah are completely giving of themselves to these three who show up unexpectedly. We should see Abraham's hospitality as related to his faith, which is rewarded by God. Abraham's visitors were clearly sent from God. **They represent God's faithfulness to His promise to Abraham that he and Sarah will have a son**. Abraham has never doubted that God will keep His promise but has thought that perhaps that promise was not what he thought it was. Sarah can only laugh when told that she will bear a son. She had hopes when she was young but knows that humanly it is too late.

In another development, the Gospel of Luke presents Martha and Mary who welcomed Jesus into their home. They showed hospitality toward Jesus, each in her own way. Martha was 'burdened with much serving' in doing the household chores. Mary listened to Jesus' gracious message of eternal value. Martha was doing her best to serve Christ, but it seems Christ was not interested in her generosity. She is the host and wants her sister, Mary, to do her part. Of course, Jesus never says that what Martha is doing has no value. Maybe what Jesus was trying to tell Martha was that she not over worry herself, a simple meal will do. To Jesus the most important aspect of hospitality is not only in giving, but also in being attentive to the Lord, and "Mary has chosen the better part" (Lk.10:42). Jesus **simply states that there is a greater value than the physical hospitality: listening to the one who comes in the name of the Lord**. Jesus wants Martha to realize that "man does not live on the bread alone but on every Word that comes out from the mouth of God Lk. 4:4".

Only when we are able to receive others as those who come in the name of the Lord can we live the mystery spoken of by Saint Paul in the second reading today (Colossians 1:26). Christ in you, the hope for glory. Saint Paul in the Letter to the Colossians puts this mystery at the heart of our Christian life. it is in connection with this that St. Benedict wrote that the monks should receive strangers as they will receive Christ himself. **True hospitality is first of all receiving one another as God's creation, as the presence of Jesus Christ Himself**. If we recognize Christ in the others, all the other details of hospitality will take care of themselves. It is when we see only another human being with defects and sins and brokenness that we can even treat them poorly.

Finally, dear friends, let us pray today for **grace to see Christ in the others every day and at all times**. Once we see Christ present, **we will listen and we will do the works of hospitality** like Abraham, our father of faith. Let us also pray for **Divine visitation**. Because when God pays us a visit, He never comes empty-handed; His blessings far surpass the best reception we may accord to Him. May our eyes be opened in the breaking of bread like the disciples so that we will enjoy his presence all the days of our life. Amen!