

HOSPITALITY

Introduction: The theme of hospitality

The word "host" has two meanings: "the one who receives" or "the one who is received", "the one who welcomes" or "the one who is welcomed". Today, let's ask ourselves:

- How do I accept to welcome and therefore to open my door, and be bothered?
- How do I accept to be welcomed, and therefore to be dependent?

We are totally interdependent, in solidarity with each other.

I am only what I have received. (1Co 4,7) "No man is an island". No one is autonomous.

Africans speak of "Ubuntu": "I am because WE are", not "I think therefore I am".

I have been welcomed by my family, my educators, my entourage.

I am welcomed by society. I accept its lifestyles, options, priorities, everything that limits my legitimate desire for autonomy. I am a member and therefore dependent.

I've been welcomed in my mission country, where I've been accepted as I am, despite all my European complexes and blunders.

But being welcomed implies adjusting, adapting to the other, learning their language, adopting their way of life, changing software, perspective, scale of values, cultural codes....

There can be no mission without decentering, and therefore without a certain death of the old man in me, a disappropriation of his ego, his certainties, his structures...

Many missionaries say: "I've received more than I've given, I have let myself be evangelised".

Four areas of reflection: Relationship with God, with others, with self, with the world.

1* Hospitality with Jesus - I am Jesus' guest

He invites us to dwell in him, he prepares a place for us

Jn 14,1-3 ; 15,1-10 ; Ap 3,20 ; Ps; 84 (83) ;

How do I feel about this invitation? Fear? Hope?

He wants to dwell in us

Jn 1,11-14 ; 6,54-56 ; Lc 19,5 ; 1 Co 3,16 ; 6,19 ;

What does this welcome imply for me? Joy? Fear of being disturbed?

How do I experience the presence of Jesus (or the Spirit) within me?

2* Hospitality with my neighbor - I am my neighbor's guest

Hospitality is very present in the Scriptures: Gn 18,1-15 ; Hb 13,2 ; 2 R 4,8-10 ;

Mt 25,35; Lk 10,38-42; 14,12-13; 24,28-29; Ac 16,15, 34; Ro 15,7; etc...

Which text speaks to me most? Challenge? Thanksgiving?

"In community, we are each other's guests"

Welcome the other as other, because he is other: Loving them in their otherness.

To what extent do I accept and appreciate differences, even those that shock me?

Repeat to myself that the other is a gift from God. In concrete terms: so-and-so, so-and-so, so-and-so....

Do I give thanks for my community? Or in perpetual jeremiad?

Being welcomed as a guest in my community: am I ready to adapt to others?

To take an interest in their lives, their work, their hobbies? to change my priorities, my tastes?

Or do I seek to impose my views? By denigrating others?

Am I tempted to take advantage of community life without contributing anything?

3* Hospitality with myself - I am the guest of my own personality and experience.

Welcoming oneself as God made us, as he loves us, with our DNA, our qualities, our background, our education, our narrowness, our handicaps, our tares, our obsessions...? Is 49,15-16 1Co 4,7

Don't spend your time comparing and complaining because you're not like this, or like that: my body, my appearance, my intelligence, my memory, my health, my age...

Péguy: "You made us of clay, so don't be surprised to find us clayey".

"It's easier than you think to hate yourself. Grace is forgetting oneself. But if all pride were dead within us, the grace of graces would be to humbly love ourselves like any of the suffering members of Jesus Christ."

(Bernanos)

Welcome myself and give thanks for what I am, for all that I have received and will receive again.

4* Hospitality with creation - I am the guest of the created universe

Pope Francis likes to speak of the 'common home' for which we are responsible. We are not placed in creation like an actor on a stage. Man is not a stranger in the universe; he is a part of it, an animal among others. We are an intimate part of it. We are hosts, in the sense that we are welcomed into it, but also in the sense that we are its stewards, and we must welcome others and future generations into it.

"We are all part of this gift of creation. We are part of nature, not separate from it. The creation narratives in the Book of Genesis suggest that human existence rests on three fundamental, interrelated relationships: with God, with our neighbor, and with the earth... We are not God. The earth precedes us and has been given to us... This implies a relationship of responsible reciprocity between human beings and nature. Every human community can take from the goodness of the earth what it needs to survive, but it also has a duty to safeguard it and guarantee its continued fertility for future generations... Every creature is the object of the Father's tenderness, who gives it a place in the world. Even the fleeting life of the most insignificant being is the object of his love and existence.... Created by the same Father, we and all beings in the universe are united by invisible bonds, forming a kind of universal family, a sublime communion that impels us to sacred respect.... Everything is linked, and as human beings, we are all united as brothers and sisters in a marvellous pilgrimage, intertwined by the love that God has for each of his creatures, and which also unites us, with tender affection, with brother sun, sister moon, sister river, mother earth... (Excerpts from Laudato si)

Take Francis of Assisi, for example, who lives in symbiosis with creation. For him, creation is a family to which he belongs: brothers, sisters ("brother sun, sister moon, brother wind, sister water..."). At a time when modern man is transforming other partner creatures into objects, Francis of Assisi urges us to move beyond a utilitarian vision of nature, and of animals in particular. He invites us to enter into a contemplative relationship with them, seeing them as brothers and sisters, sons and daughters of the same Creator God.

Conclusion Being a host in both senses of the word invites me to :

Not to see myself as the centre of the world, but as a subject called to receive and give.

Come out of my shell, out of my comfort zone, out of navel-gazing....

Accept dependence. Not to seek an autonomous, self-sufficient life, dependent only on oneself in one's own bubble. My freedom: I have the right to... I do what I like. I don't ask myself if it might bother my brothers.

Accepting to adapt and change my ideas (Mr. Know-it-all), and my ways of doing things.

Realize my status as a creature "Remember that you are ash" "I am because we are".

My ego fades as I realize that I'm just participating in a huge network of which I'm the host, in both senses of the word.

Like the Olympics, "the important thing in life is to participate".

This is also how my ego takes on its full dimension, and therefore its full value (Jn 15,11 ff).

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