

LEAD WITH HOSPITALITY

As Christians we are called to treat others as we would treat our Savior, "Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me." (Matt. 25:40). This begs the question, if we cannot welcome others into our home how well can we welcome Christ into our hearts? Hospitality involves more than just coffee and doughnuts and it should permeate our every relationship.

Below are some helpful tips on how to sharpen your practice of hospitality in any situation!

PARISH

MAKE IT PERSONAL

When writing announcements, pretend you're speaking directly to one person. People want to feel invited NOT notified. Ex. "There will be a discussion in the hall at 7pm on Tuesdays." vs "We're excited to announce a new opportunity to grow in your faith alongside other parishioners. We would love for you to join us and share your thoughts on our topic. Meet us in the hall...."

BE AN AMBASSADOR - INTRODUCE YOURSELF

Even 'super-Christians' can often beeline for our cars after Mass. If you're trying to foster a sense of community in your parish you should make an effort to get to know people. Be on the lookout for newcomers. Introduce yourself, exchange contact information, consider inviting them for coffee or even dinner to welcome them to the parish and get to know each other.

PERSONAL

ADJUST YOUR ATTITUDE!

Whether you're hosting guests in your home, welcoming them to an event or evangelizing on the street your attitude and demeanor can have a huge effect on making someone feel welcome or comfortable. Consider your body language - Mother Teresa always stressed the importance of smiling. Are you making appropriate eye contact? Are your arms crossed or is your body language more open?

GET INTERESTED

People want to be known, and they will feel more welcome if you are interested in learning about them. When making conversation stay away from politics (and even religion initially). Ask them about themselves, their work, family, hobbies. Get to know them and give them the opportunity to talk about things that excite them. They may not remember what you said but they will remember how you made them feel.



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PRACTICAL

Pope Francis calls us to practice the virtue of hospitality in imitation of Jesus when he writes the following in his exhortation, *Gaudete Et Exsultate*, on our call to holiness. Reflect on this passage and consider these tips for being a great host!

Let us not forget that Jesus asked his disciples to pay attention to details. The little detail that wine was running out at a party. The little detail that one sheep was missing. The little detail of noticing the widow who offered her two small coins. The little detail of having spare oil for the lamps, should the bridegroom delay. The little detail of asking the disciples how many loaves of bread they had. The little detail of having a fire burning and a fish cooking as he waited for the disciples at daybreak.

A community that cherishes the little details of love, whose members care for one another and create an open and evangelizing environment, is a place where the risen Lord is present, sanctifying it in accordance with the Father's plan.

CONSIDER THEIR COMFORT

When people are comfortable in their bodies they are more likely to share their hearts. You can help people feel comfortable by considering their potential needs. Do they know where the restroom is? Are they hungry or thirsty? If possible, always have some refreshment to offer.

AMBIANCE IS IMPORTANT

The environment can either distract from your event or contribute to it. If someone is thinking about that weird smell or awkward clutter, they're not engaging in conversation or opening up in discussion. Make sure bathrooms are clean, consider lighting a candle, put away clutter and make sure there is enough seating.

LITTLE TOUCHES GO A LONG WAY

Pope Francis talks about "the little details of love." Little touches of beauty or consideration can make your guests feel truly cared for and special. Consider getting inexpensive flowers to place throughout the space or offering infused water (just add some slices of citrus or cucumber!). Guests will appreciate the thoughtfulness.

MAKE THEM FEEL AT HOME - BE GENEROUS

It's always a little uncomfortable to be in a new place, especially with new people. If you're in a shared space like a parish hall, make it feel homey by using tablecloths, flowers, and picking a room not too big or small. Make your guest feel a part of a community. Put them at ease by playing down faux pas and awkwardness. If they bring children offer a place to change a diaper or safe space to play.

This is not an exhaustive list. The only way to learn hospitality is to practice it!