



MINISTRY HIGHLIGHTS

SISTERS & ASSOCIATES



JUNE 2019

Putting on the Mind of Christ: Living Radical Hospitality in All Things

by Sister Beth Kress

Have you ever been greeted with, “Oh – it’s YOU,” when meeting the person behind whose door you knocked? Or, have you ever opened your door and offered the *same greeting* to a person on the other side?

Whether we see ourselves as visitor, guest, stranger, host or friend, the attitude that we bring into an encounter strongly affects our relationship to God, to ourselves, to others, to the planet and is at the deep center of radical hospitality.

Describing the spiritual life, Henri Nouwen explores creating space for strangers through hospitality. Using the story in Genesis 18 of the three strangers who visited Abraham, Nouwen illustrates the choice of hospitality over hostility and suggests that the Trinity is a model of hospitality, a fountain of unity, peace, harmony, mutual love and humility.

Hospitality, an attribute of God, the Three in One, is for us to emulate. As in Rublev’s icon, the table is the place of Abraham’s hospitality to the angels and God’s place of hospitality to us. We are invited to complete the circle, to join the dance, *to complete the movements of God in the world by our own response*. God is both guest and host. We are both host and guest.

How does radical hospitality manifest itself? St. Paul appeals to the early Christians of Philippi to take on the mind of Jesus, to both be and do all in the Spirit of Jesus who modeled love, compassion, mercy, forgiveness, humility and so much more. ... humbly regard others as more important than yourselves, each looking out not for his own interests, but [also] everyone for those of others. *Have among yourselves the same attitude that is also yours in Christ Jesus ...* (Philippians 2:1 -6)

The Radical Hospitality Promise Group has gathered several times to reflect, pray, listen and share our understandings of radical hospitality. We have named, among others, such ideas as hospitality in daily relationships, more than “tea-cup” hospitality, creating comfortability and room for all, presence and openness. We identified spheres of racial, educational, economic, religious diversity and the need to challenge our reasons for un-comfortability, to distinguish between “othering” and “the other.” By engaging in contemplative time and space, connecting to our baptismal call to put on Christ, together we are empowered to renew our promises to be compassionate, loving and merciful, even when we don’t feel like it.

To live as followers of Nano Nagle, we recognize the importance of integrating dimensions of our charism – the interior (being) and the exterior – **to be** *radically hospitable in all relationships* and **to do** *radical hospitality through contemplation, service, advocacy, dialogue, communication and education*. In highly charged political times, we must *be* and do decency, openness, attentiveness, forgiveness and mercy; we must foster and facilitate reconciliation, peace, love, mutuality, communal decision-making, having *the same attitude that is Christ's* – radically being welcoming hearts and acting with welcoming hands.

**Do you have a story to share
about radical hospitality?**

Email your story to:

jane@dubuquepresentations.org



¿QUÉ TAL, BOLIVIA?

[WHAT'S HAPPENING, BOLIVIA?]

Los Naranjos (The Orange Trees), a small rural community south of Entre Ríos, was the site for the Retreat of Pastoral Agents of Prison Ministry of the Diocese of Tarija. Coming from four different cities/towns, the volunteer ministers are a diverse group composed of retired professionals, shop owners, working poor, members of prayer groups and ordinary good-hearted individuals. Padre Miguel Sotelo, their excellent guide, works untiringly to bring healing into the world, especially in the prisons where it is so desperately needed.

From the large prison in Tarija to the small jail in Entre Ríos, Miguel is known and respected by the prisoners. However, the prison authorities fear his directness. Especially in Tarija, authorities do what they can to thwart his influence, hoping he will be discouraged and abandon his ministry. Where there is corruption and denial of human rights, Miguel will not be silenced.

He believes that all persons need inner healing and works with the ministers and prisoners alike so that they can come to know the love of God, love of self and love of others. The ministers are most effective when they are doing their own inner work. Marked by wounds received from the beginning of life in our mother's womb and experienced throughout our lives, the victim can become the abuser. Self-awareness allows one to grow and to forgive self and others. Miguel effectively employs psycho-therapeutic techniques in his conversations, presentations and prayers.

Motivated by sharing of ministry stories from the pastoral agents from Tarija, Bermejo, Yacuiba, and Entre Ríos, the participants felt affirmed. The diverse activities that vary from site to site include support of basic alternative education, meeting personal needs of prisoners, listening, catechesis, sacramental programs, celebrations of the Word, selling of crafts made by the prisoners and the list goes on. The small group from Entre Ríos, composed of women struggling to make a living to support their families, decided that their biggest challenge is to conquer the problem of "el tener tiempo" (having enough time). They have begun to plan how to organize their time and prioritize new activities.



Many of the Entre Ríos crowd having coffee before returning home.



Sitting by the river during free time.



Enjoying a meal together.

Hermanas Therese Corkery, Suzanne Takes, Mery Cari Paz and Marge Healy



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Getting to Know Tutors and Students

This month, we are bringing you original writing from a student and from a tutor. We wanted to give you an opportunity to get to know some of our community members, in their own words!

“What I remember most about Mexico is time spent with my family and my Mom’s food. I grew up in a big family with 13 members. I am the third oldest in my family. I was born in a small town where there is not a lot of opportunities and a future to help my family or for myself. So I desired to sacrifice my life to come to United States. It was not simple to move to a different country with people, food and language, but I believe that God is going to protect me and guide me. The interesting thing about this country is that you can find amazing people with a big heart to help you everywhere. Eleven years ago, I met the love of my life, my amazing wife, in Colorado. We moved six years ago to Dubuque, Iowa, where she is from and her family lives. I really enjoy being part of her family and learning more about this culture and language. I miss my country but I love my home. I can see myself with a better future and job, safe with my own family. God Bless America.”

Pedro Crispin de Jesus, Presentation Lantern student

“Food and stories have power to connect people. I find myself talking a lot about cooking with both students I tutor. We’ve swapped recipes from our traditions and shared stories about cooking with family and friends. No wonder the Sacrament involves sharing food and drink – we were made to taste and see goodness!”

Cassie Borges, M. Div. student, Wartburg Theological Seminary and Presentation Lantern tutor



A mother and daughter each received a separate learning time with use of our child play area.



English language and citizenship learning pairs are hard at work, studying in the Lantern Center.



A Thursday evening tea time treat. Our Brazilian student brought a delicious treat called "impossible cake" to share with the group for our intern Jess Brown's last week with us. Thankfully, Jess is going to continue volunteering with us until she leaves for grad school in Des Moines later this summer.



HISPANIC OUTREACH MINISTRY OF EVANGELIZATION

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While I am still energized and inspired by the Hispanics in the area where I am, recently I see a new trend emerging, which brings great sadness. Several months ago, a factory in Farley dismissed all Hispanic workers who didn't have the right kind of documentation, because they were told a new law was coming which would punish them for having people with false documents.

That is repeating itself in other businesses in the area. While I am not free to go to the places and ask, because I might put others at risk, I have learned from the Hispanics that the owners say they received a letter from the social security office telling them to check the workers' numbers. While the owners themselves might not be aware of the problem, the Hispanics do know. So when asked to submit a different copy of their social security card, or go to the social security office to clear up the problem, they just don't go back. I have been following up, and at least the Hispanics do receive their paychecks.

I will just give a couple instances of what is happening with the families after that happens. One man, the main wage earner, was able to find a job through a friend of his picking up garbage in Dubuque. Another man had to leave his family in Dyersville, and went to Denver, Colorado, to work in construction. Two women who are the main wage earners now, due to deportation and marriage problems, spent a day putting in applications in Wisconsin and Illinois, and are hoping they get hired. Because school is out, this would be a good time to move and get resettled, they claim. However I am worried that the same problem will follow them there.

There really is no solution. When I think of creativity and resilience, I think of the undocumented people whom I know personally, who keep going in the midst of so many obstacles. I certainly have an opportunity to extend hospitality through my presence, my words and my prayers. So often it seems hopeless, and yet the alternative in Mexico keeps them going and moving from place to place, hoping that someday there will be a welcome mat and a door open to receive them.

I know you are praying for the immigration situation, and I tell the people all the time that not all of us in this country have the same attitude towards them. Thank you for your support and prayers. We may lose our Hispanic population in Iowa, and other states, if we do not offer sanctuary – radical hospitality – to them soon.

Blessings & gratitude,
Sister Paula Schwendinger