

**“Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.”
I Peter 4:9**

In many cultures, hospitality is very natural. I have traveled to Mexico, Malawi, and India and in each place I have been invited into someone’s home and shared a meal with them. Yet, it does not seem to be very natural for many of us, myself included. I know students from other countries who have come to the United States for schooling and have never been inside an American home. Why is this?

Christine Pohl, a professor of Christian Social Ethics at Asbury Theological Seminary, suggests that among American Christians hospitality is practiced only by those who have a “gift” for it. She describes true hospitality this way: “Hospitality . . . is a concrete expression of love – love for sisters and brothers, love extended outward to strangers, prisoners, and exiles, love that attends to physical and social needs. Within acts of hospitality, needs are met, but hospitality is truncated if it does not go beyond physical needs. Part of hospitality includes recognizing and valuing the stranger or guest. Hospitality is not optional for Christians, nor is it limited to those who are especially gifted for it. It is, instead, a necessary practice in the community of faith.”

The fourth century preacher, John of Antioch, who is better known as Chrysostom (The Golden Mouth), observed that the practice of hospitality has little to do with having a nice home or being wealthy. He said that hospitality is a simple matter of loving generosity: “If you have a hospitable disposition, you own the entire treasure chest of hospitality, even if you possess only a single coin. But if you are a hater of humanity and a hater of strangers, even if you are vested with every material possession, the house for you is cramped by the presence of guests.”

If hospitality is difficult for you, consider praying the following prayer of St. Francis of Assisi:

Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace;
Where there is hatred let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
To be consoled as to console;
To be understood as to understand;
To be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive;
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Pastor Garth Allen