

[Readings: Gen. 18:1-10a; Psalm 15; Col. 1:24-28; Lk. 10:38-42]

Our readings this weekend focus on the live, active and transforming work of the Holy Spirit in our Salvation History, especially through the ministry of hospitality. In our First Reading, what is Abraham's reaction when God appears as three strangers? Does Abraham prostrate himself at their feet and remain in an attitude of perpetual adoration? Does he beg for wise teaching or seek moral instruction about certain matters?

No, he springs into extreme hospitality. He is banging pots and pans for quite a while before he exchanges one word with his special company. And this would have been in keeping with the Jewish moral code, which placed hospitality as the highest response to others in need. St. Paul calls this "unknowingly ministering to angels." St. Mother Teresa of Calcutta calls it "serving God in the distressed disguise of the poor." Jesus calls it being Good Samaritans, as we heard in last Sunday's Gospel.

Abraham's wife, Sarah, is no longer confined to her tent in the role of a domestic. Like Martha in today's Gospel, she comes into the presence of the three guests with flour on her hands certainly, but deals with them directly. None of this should be happening. None of this was allowed to happen in the culture of that time. OR in the time of Jesus with Martha and Mary. But the Holy Spirit is doing live, active and transforming work in the history of our salvation.

True hospitality seeks out the needs of the guests and tries to meet them as best as possible. How hospitable are we to each other when we enter this dwelling and encounter each other? Sometimes the only Bible people encounter is the Bible you present to them!

*When have you welcomed the presence of God in an unexpected way?*

One of my favorite stories about Dorothy Day was the time she was being interviewed by a young reporter at a Catholic Worker House. A similar story has been attributed to a saintly Cardinal Archbishop in South America Dom Helder Camara and to Blessed Solanus Casey. It seemed that every few minutes into the interview the doorbell would ring.

Dorothy would politely excuse herself and tend to the one in need. After a number of such interruptions, the reporter became frustrated and wondered out loud why it didn't seem to bother Dorothy. She was as calm and serene as ever. She smiled at him and told him that every time the doorbell rang it was an opportunity for her to serve Jesus, and what could be more important than that?

*How do you respond to the interruptions in your day and in your life?*

I got into theological trouble with a Pentecostal friend of mine when today's Second Reading came up: "In my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ on behalf of his body, which is the Church." She thought I was implying that the redeeming suffering of Jesus Christ on the cross was somehow imperfect, and lacking in something. Far from it!

His sacrifice was once and for all, total, complete and fulfilling the Father's will. That is what we re-present every time we celebrate Mass. Nothing about that is imperfect! But what IS imperfect is when we fail to unite the sufferings you and I are going through right now, with that perfect suffering of Christ. This passage from Saint Paul reminds us that the crosses in our lives are not meaningless. If we use our cross to unite ourselves with Christ Crucified, our suffering is transformed into an act of love for God. The Holy Spirit is doing live, active and transforming work in the history of our salvation.

*How do you find the strength and energy to face your challenges?*

It has been a very difficult few weeks for our country and for some countries around the world. The ongoing wars, terrorist attacks, the multiple attacks and killings by disoriented men, the dozens of attacks on our pro-life facilities. The whole world without God turning upside down.

When you and I share in these sufferings, and in the domestic and demonic sufferings of abuse, bullying and worse, we fill up what is still empty in the sufferings of Christ, who sees, who listens, who stands by us, and who weeps with us. And who, as a good Minister of Hospitality, gives us a message of hope in His Word and who feeds us with His Very Self. AMEN!