

Sunday 16-C6 homily by Fr. Gabor

Today's first reading is amazing, especially if you put it in the context of the history of the Jewish, Christian and Muslim religions.

It is amazing, because it reminds me of how far a simple act of kindness towards strangers, and faith in God's promises can go; how far reaching is the effect of hospitality and faith. Abram shows genuine hospitality to the three visitors at the oak of Mamre (see picture), an ordinary daily act of kindness, but in return they promise that He will have a child within a year, despite that he is well advanced in age, and on top of it they also promise that his descendants will be as many as the grains of sand on the seashore and as the stars in the sky. What an amazing sign of God's generosity in return for an ordinary act of kindness and faith. The many millions of Jewish people and allegedly the Arabs are the physical descendants of Abraham, and the billions of Christians are Abraham's descendants in faith, because our faith is based on Abraham's faith. So this means that basically there would be no Jewish and Arab nations and there would be no Christians at all anywhere in the world without Abram's simple hospitality and faith. We would not know God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and their immense love for us. What a sad world we would live in!

But one simple act of hospitality and faith makes all the difference in every age. It makes a huge difference to visitors to our church as well, on Sunday. *If you read Google reviews of our church, almost all of them refer to what kind of hospitality they have received!* This is why it is so important that we have welcomers at the church door and in the pews as well; in the pews as well. Yes, welcoming shouldn't only happen at the door, but also in the pews before Mass, with a smile and perhaps handshake, at the time of the sign of peace and also after Mass. Welcoming is not only the duty of the welcomers at the door, but everyone's. During the week sometimes I welcome tourists and they really appreciate hospitality, and it is good to see parishioners also who are really welcoming towards them. These tourists always appreciate the kindness and hospitality we show towards them, and I hope they remember not only our beautiful church, but also the people whom they met here. Unfortunately some people also walk into our church with a pale face, not responding to welcoming words, which may put you off, but that shouldn't discourage you from continuing to show kindness and welcome both to strangers and other church members. Other church members are also important, but sadly often I see fellow church members passing by each other without saying anything; it is almost like ignoring each other. That's frankly antisocial and not a Christian attitude. We are a family of God, so listen to what St. John says in his first letter: how can you say you love God whom you cannot see while you ignore your brother or sister whom you can see (cf. Jn 4:20). So if you claim to love God, love His children as well; let's extend the heavenly Father's welcome to His children,

our brothers and sisters in Christ, and also remember what St. Benedict has taught us: when you welcome strangers you welcome Christ who is in them.

In the Gospel reading we hear about Martha and Mary who welcome Christ himself. Their actions reminds me of the two different aspects of hospitality: giving food and drink to visitors on the one hand, like Martha does and having conversation with them on the other hand, like Mary does. However in the Gospel story it is Jesus who is the visitor. We can presume that Jesus doesn't visit people for eating, but for a spiritually nourishing conversation; he the visitor wants to nourish you, so you, just like Mary, need to listen, rather than fret about all the time, as Martha does. That's why Jesus says: Mary chose the better part, ie. the better part of hospitality. Every host need to be both a giver and also a receiver. Through this Gospel story Jesus reminds you, especially if you always keep yourself busy, to stop and just listen and spend time with Him; you don't always have to be productive and active; be also contemplative: someone who listens not only with an ear, like Martha does, but also with a heart, like Mary does, and you will be refreshed, you will find rest (cf. Mt 11:28), and then you can continue doing what you do with more love and dedication.