

## 16th Sunday in Ordinary Time

**“Guests” is the term we use for the people we feed through the cathedral’s Morning Glory Ministries. Oh, to be honest, we sometimes slip and refer to the homeless, the needy or the poor. But we officially call them “guests” to remind ourselves how we are to treat them. There are other places they can go for a meal, but our guests like to receive the respect we offer, a respect we hope will make an impact on their day. Occasionally one of them does not return that respect or show appreciation for their meal. But when you help others, if you do it because you want them to say thanks, because you want some recognition, you do it for the wrong reason. The point of giving is to give. This is true in families and among friends. You don’t always hear the appreciation you’d like. I feel that I never adequately thanked my parents for all they did, but how could I?**

**Today’s gospel is an account of Jesus becoming a guest. Martha and Mary are archetypes of the active and contemplative life. Some people describe themselves in terms of one of these women: “I’m a Martha,” or “I’m a Mary.” Most people in our culture are Marthas, busy as we can be, not giving sufficient time to relax with guests.**

**To set up that gospel the lectionary serves us a reading from the Book of Genesis about the hospitality that Abraham offered a mysterious visitor to his home. It was a hot day. Abraham was sitting by the front flap of his tent. That was the sum total of his activity at that time: sitting. Suddenly he saw a vision: a man, or was it three men? This mysterious presence so moved him that he ran up to them, bowed down, and offered to make them his guests. “Let some water be brought,” he pleaded, “that you may bathe your feet, and then rest yourselves under the tree.” This was the equivalent of offering strangers a bath and an air-conditioned bedroom. Abraham offered more: “let me bring you a little food, that you may refresh yourselves.” When they agreed, he turned to his wife Sarah, who was not sitting by the front flap but doing housework, or “tentwork,” I guess. To serve them “a little food” Abraham asked Sarah to knead “fine flour” and a servant to prepare a “tender, choice steer.” Often, when I’m making a donation to food pantries and clothes closets, I’m giving away expired canned goods and threadbare shirts. But Abraham gave his guests the best.**

**The men ate in the shade of the tree, and then they asked Abraham where Sarah was. He said, “There in the tent.” One of them promised, when he returned next year, Sarah would have a son. Abraham would be 100 years old; Sarah 90. Today’s reading stops there, but in the next verses, when Sarah overheard this, she laughed. When one visitor rebuked her, she lied about laughing, but he let her know he knew. When their son was born, Abraham and Sarah gave him the name Isaac, which sounds like a word for “laugh”. Sarah explained, “God has given me cause to laugh, and all who hear of it will laugh with me.”**

**The man or three men who visited Abraham were a manifestation of God, and for us Christians they foreshadow the Holy Trinity, three Persons in one God. They bestowed the best gift on this couple after they had received best gifts. We sometimes withhold our best, locking it up, saving it for some occasion, thinking someone else will appreciate it down the line. But when we give now, even to strangers, we will receive, and when we give the best, we get the best in turn.**

Saturday, July 16, 2022