

Holy Hospitality

Don't forget to show hospitality to strangers, for some who have done this have entertained angels without realizing it! –Hebrews 13:2 NLT

What is 'Holy Hospitality' and how can I show it?

We have affirmed through our baptismal vows that we are all to be ministers of the church. That means we are ALL called to the important ministry of Holy Hospitality, welcoming others as warmly as we would like to be received. At St. Mark's, we have recently been blessed with quite a few newcomers and visitors, so let's consider how we can be truly welcoming. In general, we want to be as warm and open as we can, while still being sensitive to the reactions of our guests. Some of these ideas are old ones, some may be new to you, and all are rooted in Christian love.

What will you try next Sunday?

As you walk into the church...

- offer a silent prayer of thanksgiving for everyone present.
- think of a line from a favorite prayer such as "Be in the heart of each to whom I speak; in the mouth of each who speaks to me."
- wave, smile, and speak to others on your way in and out of church.

When you first enter the Narthex...

- put on both your nametag and your smile.
- look around for at least one person who is not familiar to you.
- say 'hello', introduce or re-introduce yourself, and shake hands.
- be especially warm to families with children, making it clear that their children are welcome—to stay with them in church, to go to the Child Care center or the Sunday School class.

After you are seated and finished praying...

- make eye contact with someone near you and give a smile or nod.
- be alert for any visitor or newcomer sitting near you.
- help others follow the service bulletin and find the hymns.
- sit in a different place from usual once in a while to get acquainted with new people.

During the Peace...

- seek out a newcomer, a person you don't know well, or someone who isn't being greeted by many others.
- let your attitude show that you really care—that this is not just a formal routine.
- try to never overlook someone near you in your eagerness to greet your family members and dear friends.
- take this opportunity to quickly introduce a newcomer to at least one other person.

As you exit the church...

- guide newcomers or visitors, if you can, to exit by the center aisle so they can meet Father Keith and introduce them.
- ask visitors to sign the Guest Book—even if they have been to St. Mark's before.
- give visitors a copy of *The Good News* and other leaflets available in the narthex.
- invite everyone to Coffee Hour.

In the Parish Hall...

- walk with visitors all the way to the food table and coffee pot.
- introduce them to any friend you meet along the way, but be sure to include the new friends in your conversation.
- help find a seat for the person or family and introduce them to the others at the table.
- listen carefully to the person during your conversation.
- invite newcomers to an activity or service area that might fit their own interests and gifts.

When you are leaving the church...

- tell at least one person that you look forward to seeing them again next Sunday.
- offer another silent prayer for those you talked with and for this ministry of Holy Hospitality at St. Mark's.

Throughout the week and the seasons of the church year...

- think of the person who made you feel most welcome when you first came to St. Mark's, and pretend that is who you are.
- invite neighbors, colleagues, and members of your extended family to one of our special services or programs.
- remember that Holy Hospitality does not just happen but is a ministry, and you have been called to minister in any way you can.

How would Jesus feel?

Next Sunday, look around and remember that Jesus himself is joining us for worship and fellowship in the person of each visitor, newcomer, and occasional guest. He is there on a visit of 'inspection' as well as of grace.