



build. plant. grow.  
*the word this week*



ordinary  
time



*Hospitality*



lectionary  
reading

## Cycle C

### Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Lectionary #108

#### Reading I: Genesis 18: 1-10A

In the ancient world, **hospitality** to the stranger was essential, not only as sign of respect for the other person, but also a mark of identifying the sacredness of human life. To not offer **hospitality** to the traveling stranger could, in some cases, mean certain death for the traveler, given the harshness of the desert and arid environment. Abraham willingly greets and goes out of his way to assist the three men. Abraham wishes to provide them with food and drink in order to refresh them as they continue their journey. The generosity of Abraham and Sarah brings upon them the blessing of the three visitors in as much as they foretell the birth of a son to the aged couple. In the Christian Tradition the three strangers represent the Trinity.

#### Reading 2: Colossians 1: 24-28

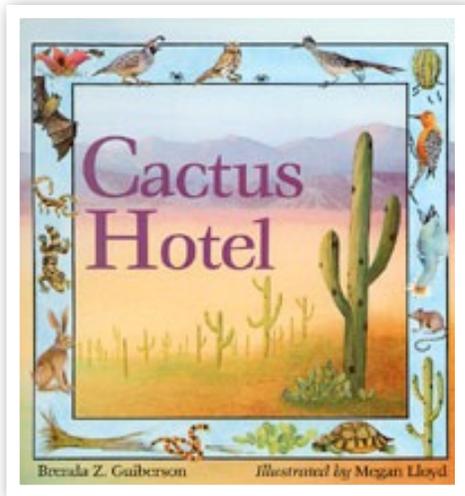
Saint Paul's letter to the Colossians speaks of stewardship, which is caring for all things given to a person. A crucial element to being a good steward is to recognize that all things belong to God, and we should use them rightly in order to offer **hospitality** to others.

#### Gospel: Luke 10: 38-42

In the gospel we encounter a home visit by Jesus to the house of Martha and Mary. In this story we see that Martha is doing all the acts of **hospitality** by herself, and is concerned that Mary is not assisting her. Although **hospitality** is a key component of living the Christian life, it must not overshadow learning and spending time with the Lord. It is of long tradition that Martha and Mary reflect the two components of living the Christian life. Martha represents the active, while Mary reflects the contemplative. We are called to seek a balance in living the Christian life.



children's  
story



### *Cactus Hotel*

Written by Brenda Z. Guiberson  
Illustrated by Megan Lloyd  
Publication: 1991 Henry Holt  
ISBN 13: 978-0805029604



character  
education  
activity

**Hospitality is first recognizing the need of another person and then going to some lengths to provide for the need. It is doing unto others what you would have them do unto you.**

## Cactus Hotel

In this very unique book, where the main character is a Saguaro cactus, the theme of hospitality in dire circumstances of the desert environment could well drive home the importance of **hospitality** for survival. The story speaks of a normal hot, dry day in the desert with birds and other animals scurrying about looking for food. When they get tired they stop and rest at a giant cactus. It is their hotel in the desert. The cactus provides shelter and protection, and in return the animals eat the pests that could harm the cactus. The cactus grows larger and larger and will live for about two hundred years. When one animal moves out, another moves in. Besides providing a lesson in **hospitality**, the story also helps with an understanding of interdependency.

Think about how important it is for someone to pay attention to you and how it makes you feel. Now place yourself in a place where you don't know anyone and you are hungry and thirsty. All of a sudden, someone sees that you are hungry and thirsty and they offer you something to eat and drink. Now you probably feel a little more at ease being in a different place. Wouldn't you want to make someone feel the same way?

Abraham and Sarah offered **hospitality** to the three strangers and were in fact entertaining God himself. In another gospel, written by Saint Matthew, Jesus says *whatever you do for the least of my brothers or sisters you do to for me*. Each time we show graciousness and **hospitality** to others we are, in fact, ministering to the God that resides in the other person.

## Hospitality at the Cactus Hotel

Step One: Have the students build a model of the Cactus Hotel large enough that it can provide shelter for various animals that are spoken of in the story.

Step Two: Each day through the month or beyond place the name of a student on the model of the cactus and encourage the student to be the Cactus Hotel for that day by doing acts of hospitality for the other students. The students who receive the hospitality can place a small post it note on the cactus representing the kindness done for them by the Cactus Hotel that day.

**Hospitality is one of  
the ways we can  
respond to the Golden  
Rule!  
What is the Golden Rule  
again?**



**case study**

**Look.  
Feel.  
Know.  
Act.**

## What could you do today?

One of your classmates, whom you do not know very well, is out on the school yard during lunch time and you see that she doesn't have any lunch. In talking with her you find out that she forgot her lunch on the kitchen table this morning. You and your friends have more than enough among all of you to provide something for her. Will you ask your friends to volunteer some of their lunch along with yours to provide something for her?

This would be an act of **hospitality**. Even though your classmate would not starve like a stranger traveling through the desert, she would know that someone cared about her and that in itself would be a gift.

## Look Feel Know Act

**Hospitality** and gratitude are two of the marks of living out the Christian faith. Hospitality is responding to the needs of someone as we would want someone to respond to our needs.

In the Genesis story in the Gospel of Saint Luke and also in the Acts of the Apostles, attributed to Saint Luke, we see that in providing hospitality we could well be entertaining angels! In all of these accounts of the ancient practice of **hospitality**, the custom of welcoming travelers or strangers into one's home and establishing a relationship with them becomes the prism through which Jesus disciples (that includes us) can view one another and others as valuable children of God.

Once we are aware of the valid need of another and if we have the ability to reasonably assist with that need, we are called to respond to that need. If someone asks you for something you do not have, you are not obliged to give it to them. None of us can give what we do not have. We can always pray for those who are in need because we can never run out of prayers for others.

In the **Cactus Hotel**, we learn the benefits of providing for others and are challenged to think of how we can live in service of others. People have a heart and spirit that is made in the image and likeness of God, more than any other creature on the earth. Since we are made in God's image more than any other creature, we are called to do more with what we have. How are we called to be a safe haven for others, like the cactus in the **Cactus Hotel**?



## closing tool

Pray that you will seek to see the spirit of God that dwells within each person and that the Lord will bless you with enough to share with others in their need. Pray that the Golden Rule will be the guideline for your life. Amen



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