

Rev. Emmanuel-Garet Ifeakor
Kings 4:8-11, 14-16a
Romans 6:3-4, 8-11
Matthew 10:37-42

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
EPIPHANY CATHOLIC CHURCH
Louisville, KY, USA
June 28, 2026

Theme: Christ-centered Hospitality.

(Singing) “Whatsoever you do to the least of these people, that you do unto me. Whatsoever you do to the least of these people, that you do unto me.” Christ-centered hospitality. My dear friends in Christ, being a visitor, being a guest, being a traveler, a stranger, being stranded, or when you find yourself in a place that is unknown to you, is an experience that all may have gone through. Everybody here in one way or another must have been a visitor, must have been a guest, must have been a stranger, must have been a traveler, or you have found yourself where it is unknown to you. However, those moments may have been treated differently. Today, we would like to reflect on Christ-centered hospitality. First of all, we have to ask ourselves what hospitality is. Hospitality is an act of kindness. Hospitality is a friendly, generous, welcoming reception of guests or others. Hospitality is about warmth and kindness. Hospitality is welcoming and entertaining others. It is when we receive others as strangers, as visitors, as travelers, or as those who are stranded. Hospitality includes, but is not limited to, what we can call basic politeness. The basic politeness, maybe you see somebody, you say, hi! Hello! How are you? These are basic politeness in hospitality. But hospitality goes beyond basic politeness to offering a comfortable reception, like what we used to say, “home away from home” to others. In this sense, you were provided with a home away from your home.

But now we want to look at Christ-centered hospitality. What is Christ-centered hospitality? Christ-centered hospitality is when hospitality becomes intentional, deliberate, and involves a sacrificial act of receiving or welcoming other people. This is Christ-centered hospitality. Today in the readings, starting from the first reading, we are presented with Christ-centered hospitality. First, an anonymous woman in the first reading was very influential. She used to see Elisha going back and forth. She urged Elisha to dine with her. Afterward, whenever he passed by, he used to stop there to dine. This is Christ-centered hospitality in action when you

have to take something out of yourself. She talked to the husband again; can we make a room? Can we decorate a room for him so that whenever he passes, and if it is overnight, he can sleep? Thus, “since he visits us often, let us arrange a little room on the roof and furnish it for him with a bed, table, chair, and lamp, so that when he comes, he can stay there. Sometime later, Elisha arrived and stayed in the room overnight”. They did that. They made a room in the utmost part of their house. This is like what we have today as a guest room. Elisha was sleeping there whenever it was overnight. Again, we see Christ-centered hospitality in action.

In the gospel, Jesus says to His apostles, "Whoever welcomes you, welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me, welcomes the one who sent me." Continuing, he says that whoever welcomes a prophet because he is a prophet will receive the prophet's reward. Whoever gives a cup of water to anybody because they are a follower of mine will surely not lose his/her reward. So, the basic tenets of hospitality are like when we present a cup of water to people, or when we present a cup of coffee to people, or when we say, ‘come in and eat with me’, or when we invite people for lunch or for dinner. These are the basic principles of hospitality. It is also good that, as we reflect today on Christ-centered hospitality, we look into ourselves to know how far we have gone with receiving or welcoming others, especially people who are strangers, people who are guests, people who are stranded, and travelers. One thing God told the people of Israel when they were about to enter the Promised Land is, “You shall not oppress a resident alien; you know the heart of an alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt” (cf. Exodus 23:9. So they were warned not to mistreat or exploit foreigners, following the uncharitable experiences they had in Egypt. In this vein, one of the strong points or one of our strengths here at Epiphany is welcoming people. So, today we want to thank everybody who in one way or another, participated in welcoming people to Epiphany. This is one of our strong points. But it goes beyond Epiphany. It goes beyond Epiphany into your house. It goes beyond Epiphany to when you are working. It goes beyond Epiphany to when you are driving on the road. It goes beyond Epiphany to when you especially extend your hand to others in Christ-centered hospitality. It is deliberate. It is intentional. It is all about making sacrifices in welcoming others, even when we deny ourselves legitimate things, in order to satisfy your guests, strangers, or somebody who is stranded.

My dear friends in Christ, today we have a child to be baptized. In the second reading, the word ‘Baptism’ appeared. Paul was saying that when we are baptized, we are baptized with Christ in death and new life. One of the areas God wants you and me to shine in is in the new life of Christ-centered hospitality. We have Francis

Michael here who is going to be baptized today. The parents and Godparents had promised earlier that they were ready to bring him up in the Catholic faith. Therefore, this is a responsibility. This is a duty Godparents are taking today to help the parents in bringing up the child. The parents are the first 'catechists' at home. One of the things you are going to teach Francis Michael when he begins to grow up is to respect people because of their dignity. It includes respecting guests or aliens when they see them in school. That is what Christ-centered hospitality is.

One thing that is very remarkable is Christ-centered hospitality rewards. In the first reading, the woman who welcomed Elisha didn't have a son. Therefore, Elisha promised, "This time next year, you will be fondling a baby son." This is a reward of Christ-centered hospitality. And it happened as promised. Again, in the gospel, Jesus said that those who engage in the act of welcoming and reception of others, as we have hinted above, will surely not lose their reward. We ask God in this Mass to give us strength and grace to enable us to engage in Christ-centered hospitality. It is not easy when you deny yourself legitimate things in order to satisfy another person, especially a person you have not known before. With the grace of God, guys, we can do this. (Singing) "Whatsoever you do to the least of these people, that you do unto me." Christ-centered hospitality.