

**SAINT LUKE THE EVANGELIST 2015**  
**SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH**  
**FATHER CRAIG LOONEY**  
**2 TIMOTHY 4.5 St. LUKE 10.1**



Hospitality is as old as...Creation! God is the Supreme hospitality giver. When Adam and Eve rejected God's hospitality...he did not reject us...he set about to restore us to himself through his ultimate act of kindness and generosity...the life, death and resurrection of his much-loved son Jesus.

Kindness and generosity are key virtues we hear about in the Summary of the Law said at the beginning of every Mass: We are to love God above all else and love others in the same way we want to be loved. Love and hospitality are inextricably linked.

Judaism praises hospitality to strangers and guests. A passing traveller was invited in to the host's house, given food, and provided with a bed for night. At the end of the visit, hosts escorted their guests out and wished them a safe journey.

Genesis records the visit of three men (angels) to Abraham. They brought him and Sarah good news...even in their old age they were going to have a baby. To Abraham the three men were simply strangers passing by, and he did what God's people are supposed to do: he showed them kindness and hospitality.

The Book of Leviticus reminded the Israelites they were once strangers in a strange land. They should always treat strangers with the kind of love and hospitality they show toward their own people and families.

Today we celebrate the Feast of Saint Luke the Evangelist. The word "evangelist" comes from the Greek word "evangelion" and means "one who proclaims good news". Saint Luke is the author of the Gospel that bears his name and Acts of the Apostles.

Unique among the Gospel writers, Luke was not a Jew and he did not know Jesus personally. Saint Paul probably had something to do with his conversion. In his letter to the Colossians, Paul calls Luke "our dear doctor".

For Father Brendan Byrne, author of *The Hospitality of God: A Reading of Saint Luke's Gospel*, Luke invites us to experience God's

hospitality through the events and parables found only in Luke...

...Angels bring Good News about the birth of Jesus to shepherds, and sing "Glory to God in the Highest, and peace to all those with whom he is pleased"...the Gloria in excelsis we sing at Mass.

...The Annunciation and Mary's visit to her cousin Elizabeth where she prays, "My heart praises the Lord; my soul is glad because of God my Savior"...the Magnificat we say at Evening Prayer.

...The touching scene of Simeon holding the baby Jesus in his hands, and saying he can now die in peace, because he has seen "the light to reveal your will to the Gentiles and bring glory to your people Israel"...the Nunc dimittis which we also say at Evening Prayer.

...The Parable of the Prodigal Son...the young son's rejection of his father's love...his journey home to the father who never rejected him...welcoming his with open arms...forgiveness...mercy...hospitality! God does not reject us because of our sins...but we do have to be willing to begin the journey home!

...The Parable of the Lawyer and the Tax Collector...the lesson in humility and in acknowledging that God is the source of everything we have, and he is the one who forgives us even when we think we don't deserve his love and compassion.

...The Parable of the Good Samaritan...the despised and unwelcome Samaritan sees an injured man lying on the side of the road and does not ask to see his union card...he showed kindness and unconditional hospitality toward a complete stranger.

Today we think of hospitality almost exclusively as the thing people who are in the service industry do to make us feel welcome and for which they are paid. And yes..."Welcome aboard" and "May I help you" do go a long way to making us feel less like a stranger.

Saint Luke wants us to know through his Gospel of Hospitality that none of us are strangers in God's eyes. God's hospitality is not something we can buy like an airline ticket...it is free...but it comes with a price...

...The Good News about God's love and Jesus' selfless sacrifice is Good News we want to share with all who will listen.

