Divine and Human Hospitality

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We are all guests of God's hospitality. The world in which we live is pure gift. Our own existence, our human nature, our essential human consciousness, intelligence and creativity are all gift. The companionship of other human beings like ourselves is gift. So is the presence on earth of plant and animal life, of water and air and mineral resources, of light, of the firm earth beneath our feet and the blue-sky overhead. We did not make these things nor cause them to come into being. Moreover, we would not exist for one moment if all these things were not around us to sustain our existence.

God is the Host Exemplar of all his guests. Creation expresses God's hospitality. In the creation account in Genesis (2:8–9), God creates an entire universe prior to creating human beings. God is creating, working, and designing long before people are brought on the scene. And when God creates humans, he breathes his life into them and endows them with the freedom to enjoy or to decline his friendship. In his boundless hospitality, God welcomes all humans into his creation, excluding no one from the realm of his all-encompassing love. And just as God has welcomed us into his life, he calls us through the gift of his Son and Spirit to welcome one another as fellow guests with the same spirit of hospitality.

Jesus tells of his Father's setting up an overflowing banquet table for all people willing to accept his hospitality (Matt 22:11–10; Luke 14:16–24). Every human being is on his Father's guest list. Jesus is the grace and call of his Father, telling his disciples to give without payment what they are received without payment (Matt 10:8). Just as his disciples have received the hospitality of God, they should be willing to offer hospitality to others.

Hospitality

The custom of hospitality was worldwide and a highly regarded virtue in antiquity. It was based on a sense, given divine sanction, of the mutual obligation of people to help one another, especially the stranger. Hence temples and altars were places of asylum, and the gods were believed to protect the oppressed foreigner or the abused host. Inns and other forms of shelter for travellers, often linked with

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temples and synagogues, also became important components of hospitality as an institution.

Within the anthropological context of Mediterranean cultures, hospitality (Greek *philoxenia*; Latin *hospitium*) is a social process by means of which the status of someone who is an outsider is changed from stranger to guest. The process has three stages: the evaluation and testing of the stranger to see whether incorporation as a guest is possible without undue threat to the purity lines of the group; the incorporation of the guest under the patronage of the host and in accordance with a culture-specific code of hospitality imposing obligations upon both host and guest; the departure of the guest as a stranger now transformed into either a friend, if honour has been satisfied, or as an enemy, if honour has been infringed.

In the first-century Mediterranean world hospitality was a public duty toward strangers where the honour of the community was at stake and reciprocity was more likely to be communal rather than individual. Furthermore, whereas contemporary Western hospitality has become secularized, hospitality in antiquity was a sacred duty, not least because it opened up the possibility of revelatory encounter with strangers from another world. The story of the hospitality of Abraham and Sarah to the 'three men' by the oak of Mamre (Gen 18 and l9) is a classic instance that become proverbial (cf. Heb 13:2). Such strangers, precisely because they are outsiders and unknown, make hospitality a potential occasion for an epiphany. A classic instance from the New Testament is the revelation of the risen Christ to the two disciples during the meal at Emmaus (Luke 24:28–35).

God as Host

The biblical image of God as a host is analogous to that of the human host. God performs actions that are analogous to those of human hosts. The context for the biblical image of God as host is the importance that the ancient world placed on the obligations of hosts to their guests. For the Egyptians, being hospitable helped secure a favourable existence in future life. The Greeks regarded hospitality as a basic aspect of civilized behaviour, and its religious importance is suggested by the fact that their chief deity, Zeus, was god of hospitality. The Romans made hospitality a sacred duty, and the Hebrews evolved an elaborate code of hospitality in response to the conditions of nomadic life, where travel required a different type of accommodation from a stationary inn. Human hosts offered their guests protection, lodging and food. The actions of God that are described by the metaphor of the host follow the same pattern, with references to the provision of food being the most numerous. God extends beneficence to his creatures, often issuing an invitation or a

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command the accept the provision in such a way as to suggest the actions of a host.

God's extending food to his creatures begins with the creation of the world. The climax of Genesis 1 is God's statement that to all animals of the earth he has given every green plant for food (1:30). Later biblical references depict God as a host who provides for animals (Ps 104:27–28; Job 38:39–41). But of course it is the human creature that is usually pictured as the recipient of God's provision of food. Such provision begins in the garden. Genesis 2 is governed by the motif of God's wonderful provision for the human race, and the content of that provision is partly what a host provides – a secure and attractive place in which to live and rest, food and companionship. The first words that God speaks to Adam are an invitation to eat freely of every tree in the garden (Gen 2:16).

The metaphor of God as host is evoked in the story of the exodus. With the people of Israel utterly dependent on God for its survival in the wilderness, God provides both protection and food. (15:24–25, 27; 23: 20–23). God hosts his people with manna and water from the rock (17:1–7), as well as quail (16). Although the writer of the Exodus does not use the image of God as host, the retrospective reflection of the psalmist comes closer to doing so. Psalm 78:19 pictures God as spreading a table in the wilderness, and Psalm 105:39–41 is even most specific in its references to hosting, calling attention to God's spreading a cloud for covering, and fire to give light by night, together with an abundance of quails, bread from heaven and water.

God's hospitality in the wilderness prepares his people for life in the Promised Land, which is described (twenty times) as flowing with milk and honey. Hardly limited to the abundance of cattle, goats and bees, this phrase pictures life in the Promised Land as eating a rich banquet from God's own table (Deut 6:3). God invites his people into a Promised Land prepared for them, a place full of food, of which God says 'The land is mine; with me you are but aliens and tenants (Lev 25;23; Deut 26:9). The application is even broader in Psalm 104, where the psalmist sees the cosmos as God's garden in which all God's creatures receive provision. God's hospitality is festive, as he makes available 'wine to gladden the human heart, oil to make the face shine, and bread to strengthen the human heart' (Ps 104:15). In a similar vein, Wisdom, a personified attribute of God, builds a house and extends an invitation to the good life pictured as a lavish banquet (Prov 9:11–6). In contrast, Folly, an unworthy and wily hostess, can only offer stolen water and 'food eaten in secret' (Prov 9: 14–18).

Psalm 23 is the climax of Old Testament references to God as host. The psalm begins by comparing God's provision to that of a shepherd for his sheep, but already here the provisions thus metaphorically portrayed remind us of what a human host provides for a guest. In the last two verses of the psalm, moreover, the imagery becomes

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that of the host-guest relationship, with references to preparing a table, anointing a head for purposes of refreshment, providing an overflowing cup and dwelling in a house. God is the gracious host who invites us to dwell in the security and abundance of his house forever. His banquet displays his 'goodness and mercy' (23:6).

In the New Testament Jesus is a host on several occasions. He turned water into wine to keep the festivities going at a wedding party (John 2:1–10). Twice he miraculously fed thousands of people (Matt 14:15–21; 15: 32–38), and he taught he himself was the bread of life, the true manna sent from heaven (John 6:30–51). After his resurrection he served bread to his disciples as Emmaus (Luke 24:30) and prepared a breakfast of bread and fish for Peter and the other disciples (John 21:9–14).

The mysterious attractiveness of Jesus in John's Gospel evokes the question of the first disciples: 'Where do you live?' (1:38). The power of Jesus to draw to himself (12:32) is conditioned by the prior drawing of the Father: 'No one can come to me unless one is drawn by the Father who sent me' (6:44). And that prior drawing is a listening and a learning: 'Everyone who has listened to the Father and learned from him, comes to me' (6:35). We cannot recognize the hospitality of God in the Son unless we are prepared for such recognition by the presence of God the Host in ourselves.

The question of the first disciples does not concern Jesus' residence; rather, it concerns where and what his life is. Jesus lives 'in the Father'; 'I am in the Father and the Father is in me' (14:10).

'Come and see,' the hospitable response of Jesus, invites the disciples to experience for themselves the hospitality of his Father, God the Host, where Jesus lives: '... they went and saw where he lived, and stayed there with him the rest of the day' (1:39). Christian discipleship means both sharing Jesus' hospitality in the Father and his mission of hospitality in inviting others to that life. The 'come and see' of Jesus is what God the Host speaks in his incarnate Word. Jesus is the 'come and see,' the self-gift and call, the grace and invitation of God the Host for all humankind. Jesus communicates the mysterious attractiveness of his Father's hospitality drawing all humankind to Godself.

The mysterious beauty of the Father's hospitality in Jesus is shared by Jesus' disciples. Philip, immediately after welcoming the hospitality of Jesus, calls Nathaniel to 'come and see' Jesus (1:46). After welcoming Jesus' revelation to her 'I am he' (4:26) tells the people 'Come and see' (4:30). God the Host of creation is inviting everyone to become hospitable in sharing the hospitality of his Son.

God's Banquet of Salvation

Banquets are special meals celebrating important events. Unlike Jewish cultic feasts, they are not official worship events, but neither

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should banquets held among God's people be regarded as 'secular' events, since such banquets can mark God's intervention and display his generous hospitality.

Banquets are never mere mealtimes or only celebrations of the occasion which gave rise to the banquet. They are full of messages about social, political and religious status. Invitations signify being in the social circle. Proximity to the host and the amount of good and drink offered indicate status (Gen 43:31–4; Luke 14:7–12; John 2:10). Refusal to attend a banquet is a powerfully negative social message defying the authority and honour of the host (cf. Esth 1:12, 16–20; Matt 22:1–14).

There are many various occasions for banquets. Victories are celebrated with banquets (Gen 6:30; 31:54). When the victor is a king, the banquet is also 'royal' (2 Sam 3:20). Communities hold banquets to celebrate and give thanks for God's provision (e.g. sheep-shearing, 1 Sam 25:11; harvest, Judg 9:27). Birthdays (e.g. Gen 40:20), weddings (e.g. Gen 29:22), and funerals (e.g. Jer 16:5–9) are also celebrated with banquets.

The most numerous biblical references to God as host employ the banquet language of food and drink to portray salvation. Isaiah portrays God as inviting people to help themselves free of charge to water, wine, milk and bread (55:1–2). Isaiah (25:6) provides the benchmark image of the eschatological banquet: 'On this mountain the Lord Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine – the best of meats and the finest of wines'. Joel (3:18) and Amos (9:13) present millennial pictures of mountains dripping with wine and hills flowing with milk. The composite picture evokes a sense of abundance, satisfaction and joyful celebration all made possible by the lavish generosity of God.

Luke portrays the life and ministry of Jesus as a divine visitation to the world, seeking hospitality. The One who comes as a visitor and guest becomes host and offers God's hospitality through which the entire world can become truly human, be at home with God and one another, and know salvation in the depths of their hearts.

The banquets of Luke's Gospel are often historical events in the life of Jesus which Luke interprets as the fulfillment of the messianic prophecies (Isa 25:6; 34:6; 55:1; 65:11; Deut 12:4; Zeph 1:7). The prophetic tradition proclaimed that the Messiah would inaugurate eschatological happiness among the poor and the afflicted who would form his banquet community. The banquet is an eschatological community-concept expressing Jesus' mission of restoring communion, community and communications between God and human beings, and among human beings.

The consummation is compared to a banquet (Luke 14:16–24). At the eschatological consummation the disciples will eat and drink with Jesus in the kingdom of God (Luke 22:30). God is the host who will

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gather human persons from all corners of the earth to sit at his table with the saints of Israel (Luke 13:29; Mt 8:11–12).

The days of the Baptist, which were the period of expectation, are superseded by the days of Jesus, which are the time of presence and fulfillment: 'When John came, he would neither eat nor drink, and you say 'He is possessed.' When the Son of Man came, he ate and drank with you, and of him you say, 'Here is a glutton; he loves wine; he is a friend of publicans and sinners'' (Luke 7:33–34).

Table fellowship with Jesus anticipates the eschatological consummation in the context of the Jewish tradition, where the banquet metaphor is used to express messianic salvation. It represents the fulfillment of Jesus' messianic mission of reconciling sinner with God by gathering them into his eschatological banquet community.

The feast of salvation to which God invites all humankind is a constant in the parables and sayings of Luke's Gospel Luke's Jesus recounts the parable of the wedding banquet in which people preoccupied with worldly interests exclude themselves from the feast, symbolic of salvation and eternal happiness in the kingdom of God (14:15–24). Devoid of self-sufficiency and self-righteousness, only the poor, the crippled, the blind and lame (14:21) have the proper dispositions for welcoming the servant's invitation to the banquet. Those who accept Jesus' 'banquet teaching,' that our hospitality should be gratuitous and not be on a self-seeking basis, are simultaneously accepting God's hospitality, implied in the dinner guest's exclamation, 'Happy the person who will be at the banquet in the kingdom of God' (14:15). The time of grace, Jesus' invitation, is now.

The community of Christian faith recognizes that in this banquet episodes that Jesus is more than a mere dinner guest; rather, he is the divine host who offers the hospitality of God to the world. Jesus is God's eschatological envoy extending God's invitation of heavenly hospitality to Israel and the nations. In contrast to the Pharisees, who seek to restrict the hospitality of God to the righteous, Jesus becomes notorious for a practice of open hospitality that brought him the label 'a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners' (Matt 11:l9; Luke 7:34).

Consistent with this are a number of other aspects of Jesus's teaching and action: the prominent metaphors of meals and exuberant hospitality in the parables; the eschatological prayer for bread that Jesus teaches his disciples; the positive reception Jesus gives to women, children, the poor and the sick; the miraculous feeding of the multitudes; the alacrity with which Jesus accepts the hospitality of others and himself plays the host, not least at the Last Supper; the opposition he registers to fasting so long as he remains with his disciples; the teaching he gives on hospitality to itinerant preachers; and his teaching about God's hospitality in the kingdom of heaven: 'Many will come from east and west to sit at table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of God' (Matt 8:11; Luke 13:28–29).

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Jesus speaks of those who have continued with him in his trials being allowed to eat and drink at his table in his kingdom (Luke 22:28–30).

God's hospitality meets with rejection. The elder brother in Jesus' parable of the Prodigal Son corresponds to a stock character in biblical literature: the ungracious boor, the churlish lout, the surly and sullen refuser of God's hospitality (Luke 15:25–32). The elder brother of the prodigal refuses the invitation to participate in the banquet festivities in honor of his brother's homecoming. There is a tragic dimension to such characters, inasmuch as the banquet festivities from which they exclude themselves are the salvation and eternal life that God is hosting. The biblical tradition associates the refusal of such festivities with misplaced priorities, with the implication that dire consequences follow upon the refusal of people to welcome God's happiness

The writer of Hebrews implies the consequences of refusing God's hospitality in the grace and call of Jesus to his Father's banquet when he asks, 'How shall we escape if we refuse such a great salvation? (3:3), adding, 'See that you do not refuse him who is speaking' (12:25).

Jesus tells the Samaritan woman at the well that he can provide water that brings eternal life (John 4:13–14) and invites the thirsty to come and drink from him (John 7:37–39). In washing the disciples' feet Jesus performs a host's function (John 13:1–7). In an eschatological saying Jesus compares the coming day to a marriage banquet, picturing the reward of the servants whom the master finds awake as having the master 'gird himself and have them sit at table, and he will come and serve them' (Luke12:36–37)

The heavenly banquet of God's kingdom begins on earth at the moment of belief in Jesus Christ as savior and Lord, and it is consummated at the end of time. The book of Revelation brings the eschatological references to their culmination, with its pictures of a celestial 'marriage supper of the Lamb,' to which the redeemed are invited (Rev 22:17), and an invitation to anyone who is thirsty to 'take the water of life without price' (Rev. 22:17).

Throughout the Bible, God is clearly the host who provides food for all life. Beyond this comprehensive care for all creation, God issues an invitation to enjoy the benefits of redemption that are often poetically depicted in terms of abundant food or a banquet. The tangible blessing of food is sometimes provided by miracles that reveal the boundless generosity and hospitality of God. The food that God provides represents the life that communicates to his people.

The kingdom of God and heaven represent the culmination of God's hospitality in satisfying the hunger of the human heart. Acceptance of God's hospitality in Jesus Christ is, even now, a participation in the ultimate hospitality of the kingdom. The book of Revelation depicts the individual who accepts Christ as the host, with Christ as the self-invited guest who says, 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock;

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if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me' (Rev 3:20). Later, those who enter heaven are pictured as guests at a marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev 19:7–9). The Apocalypse ends with a final invitation: 'The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come. And let everyone who is thirsty come. Let anyone who wishes to take the water of life as a gift' (Rev 22:17).

The Last Day and the Last Supper

The Last Supper is the supreme instance of God as host in the self-giving sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Jesus serves his disciples bread and wine, using the host's language of invitation: 'Take, eat . . . drink' (Matt 26:26–29). The same terminology of hospitality appears in the instructions for the Lord's Supper in l Corinthians 11:23–26 A leading motif that enters the picture at this point is the obligation of human guests to accept God's hospitality to humankind in providing Christ as the 'paschal lamb' (1 Cor 5:7). God's hospitality defines what it means to be member's of the one 'body of Christ,' sharing Christ's eschatological banquet by eating bread, which is his body, and drinking wine, which is his blood (1 Cor 11:17–34). That is why Paul demanded a practice of hospitality that united the Christian community and why he refused to compromise lest the gospel of unity in Christ be brought into disrepute (cf. Gal 2:11–14). It was also why he demanded the refusal of hospitality from those who ate and drank at the 'table of demons,' for this would have been to acknowledge the authority of a host other than the risen Lord (1 Cor 10:14–22).

As members of the body of Christ, God not only welcomes us to share in the humanity of his Son but also in his divinity. God is the host who welcomes all humankind into the fullness of his own life; for Christ's humanity is a deified humanity, which does not in any way lose its human characteristics. These characteristics become even more authentic by communion with the God who created them. In this deified humanity of Christ's, we are called to share in it deification. This is the meaning of sacramental life and the basis of Christian spirituality. Christians, therefore, aspire to something more than a 'natural' immortality. They aspire to an everlasting communion with God, or, to use the startling language of the early Fathers, to a *theosis*.

The literary-theological whole that is Mark's Gospel depicts the last day in the life of Jesus' historical life story as the Last Day of Israel's eschatological hope for God's final coming in judgment to set all things right. The Last Day is that of a divine judgment. When God comes in judgement in such events as the Exodus, he overcomes evil and achieves a good for his people. Divine judgments or interventions are always liberation events that free his people from an evil for a good. The Last Day is the Last Judgment in which God finally

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overcomes the evils that afflict his people and achieves their ultimate blessedness in the once-and-for-all event of salvation.

The Jewish day began at sunset and ended at the following sunset. Starting with the Last Supper, Mark begins the Last Day or Judgment Day at sunset (14:17). Jesus and the Twelve celebrate the Passover meal, or Last Supper, on the Last Day, recalling the prophetic tradition that the Messiah would inaugurate eschatological happiness (communion between God and humankind, and among all humankind) through the formation of his banquet community (Is 25: 6–10; 55:11–3; 65:13–14). The Last Day is the first day of the eschatological banquet. God comes in judgment to vanquish whatever evil that would stand in the way of the ultimate blessedness that he has prepared for all humankind with the establishment of his eschatological banquet community. The Last Day is the day of liberation for life in the Messiah's banquet community Jesus, the host, communicates God's hospitality to all humankind.

Jesus, for Mark, is the Servant of God who has come to serve and to give his life for all (10:45) in the establishment of the eschatological banquet community: 'This is my blood, the blood of the covenant, which is to be poured out for all (14:24). When Mark writes of Jesus' blood poured out for all, he is not referring merely to his physical blood, but to his life given for the transformation (*theosis*) of all. We participate in his banquet community to the extent that we accept his life under the sovereignty of God's love and wisdom as our own; for, in the Jewish tradition, the blood of any creature is its life. Jews were forbidden to consume the blood of animals (Lev 17:10–16; Deut 12:16; 15:23), because God alone was to be their life-principle. When Jesus, the banquet host, offers his blood for all humankind at the Last Supper, he is implicitly identifying himself with God as the ultimate life-principle for all humankind in communion with God and one another. Through and in him, God, the host, is integrating all persons into the fullness of his life within his eschatological banquet community, establishing an indissoluble bond between himself and his people (cf. Zeph 9:11; Heb 9:16:21).

The meaning of the Last Day and the Last Supper, for Mark, can be grasped in terms of the interpretation that Jesus gives to Israel's traditional blood symbolism. Jesus communicates the hospitality of God, giving his blood (life) as the new and sacred life-principle that establishes the eschatological banquet community. His life (blood) is the gift of the divine host, liberating all humankind and integrating them in the fullness of divine and human life.

God's Hospitality in Baptism and the Eucharist

The church as the body of Christ is the sacrament of God's hospitality. The body of Christ is the created effect of God's self-giving in the

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sending of his Son and Holy Spirit. As the body of Christ (cf. Rom 12:5; 1 Cor 12:27) and the temple of his Spirit (1 Cor 3:16–17; 2 Cor 6:16) the church is the new creation, the household of God, to which God the host invites and welcomes all humankind.

God extends his hospitality through the water and the Spirit in the sacrament of baptism.

John the Baptist announced baptism in the Spirit and fire (Matt 3:11). The Spirit is the promised Messianic gift of God. The fire is the judgment which begins to see its fulfilment in the coming of Jesus (cf. John 3:18–21; 5:22–25; 9:39). Both begin with the baptism of Jesus, which is seen as a prelude to that of his faithful. Paul sees Christian baptism foretold in the passage of the Red Sea which delivers Israel from servitude (1 Cor 10:1–2). Its effective realization begins at Pentecost, which is, as it were, the baptism of the Church in the Spirit and fire.

Baptism represents our welcoming the hospitality of God in the self-gift of his Son and Spirit. Baptism confers a participation in the life of God in his Son and Spirit (Rom 6:11). The immersion represents our participation in the death and burial of Christ, and the coming out of the water symbolizes our participation in his resurrection (Rom 6:3–5; Col 2:12). Baptism is a paschal sacrament, a communion with the Pasch of Christ: the baptized dies to sin and lives for God in Christ and his Spirit.

Every baptized Christian is expected to evangelize by sharing in Christ's call to all human beings to welcome the hospitality of God for the coming of his kingdom. God the host reaches out through the hospitality of Christ and the members of his body to invite all humankind to the eschatological banquet that he has prepared for them. Evangelization witnesses to others in myriad ways the hospitality of God in Jesus Christ inviting them to life in his kingdom. It is not optional for the Christian community of faith, which has a mandate from its Lord to proclaim the good news of God the host in the gift of his Son and Holy Spirit. At the end of each of the four Gospels, Jesus orders his disciples to evangelize: 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation' (Mark 16:15; cf. Matt 28:18–20; Luke 24:47–48; John 20:21–23).

Hospitality is at the heart of evangelization. In his Olivet Discourse, Jesus made hospitality to himself and to his missionary 'brothers' the key to entering the kingdom of heaven in his statement, 'For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me' (Matt 25:35). When he dispatched his followers, he sent them out on the assumption that they would depend on hospitality as they travelled (Matt 10:9–14; Mark 6:7–10; Luke 9:11–4). Failure on the part of villagers to provide such hospitality was said by Jesus to seal their doom (Matt 10:14–15; Mark 6:11; Luke 9:5). Jesus implies that to

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reject the evangelizing missionaries proclaiming the hospitality of God the host in the good news that is Christ is to reject the hospitality that is their salvation.

God the host extends his hospitality to humankind in the eucharist, the flesh and blood of his Beloved Son, the incarnation of God, the living Word spoken in human history who became flesh and blood in order to accomplish the redemption of all humankind. It is in this dimension that the eucharist lives up to its name of being a 'thanksgiving,' a praising of God the host for the redemption wrought by his Son, and a thanksgiving of both for the Spirit who has been released into history through the saving sacrifice of Christ on the cross. Being a sacramental celebration, moreover, the eucharist is a means of sharing in Christ's praise and thanks to the Father, of identifying with the transformed humanity of Christ, 'the first born of many brothers' (Rom 8:29), and of experiencing the workings of his Spirit 'who dwells in our hearts' (2 Cor 1:22).

It is the Spirit of Jesus, alive and active in those who are united under the Fatherhood of God, that unites the body of Christ in eucharistic thanksgiving and impels it to share the hospitality of God with all humankind.

Blessed to Be a Blessing

The Christian belief that Jesus Christ is the fulfilment of the promise made to Abraham (Gal 3:14), implies human fulfilment in the reciprocity of divine and human hospitality. Abraham is the paragon of human hospitality in hosting his three angelic guests, unwittingly hosting God the host of all creation (Gen 18:1–8), who rewards him with the promise fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

Abraham's hospitality is that of the welcoming human heart responding to the visitation of God the Host of creation. The reward for that hospitality similarly occurs with the hospitality of the Virgin Mary's welcoming heart in her 'Let it be' (Luke 1:38). Mary welcomes the visitation of God the Host for the new creation in Jesus Christ.

Abraham, 'the friend of God' (James 2:23), is blessed by God the Host of all creation to be a blessing for all creation: 'I will bless you . . . and you shall be a blessing' (Gen 12:2). The God of Abraham promises that 'all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him' (Gen 18:18). Just as Abraham has been blessed to be a blessing for all humankind, the Virgin Mary is blessed to be the fulfilment of that blessing for the salvation of all humankind. Mary affirms her blessedness for all humankind: 'For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed; for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name' (Luke 1:48–49).

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Mary's hospitality participates in that of the Triune God whose Son became man that all humankind might enjoy God's eternal hospitality in the mansions that his crucified and risen Son has prepared for those who open the doors of their hearts in hospitality to welcome him (cf. Rev 3:20).

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