

Dear Friends,

I want to thank the children who wrote stewardship essays published in the bulletin over the last three weeks. Their words were inspirational, and offered insight into their willingness to offer sacrifice, be generous, and serve the needs of others because of their love for God. These young people are truly bright lights for our parish, and I am deeply impressed by their wisdom.

Recently, I started reading a book called RADICAL HOSPITALITY: BENEDICT'S WAY OF LOVE by Father Daniel Homan, O.S.B. and Lonni Collins Pratt. St. Benedict is known as the Father of Western Monasticism. He established his first monastery at Monte Cassino in the late Fifth Century. He created a rule for life in the monastery that included a profound commitment to welcoming the stranger, or pilgrim, in the same way a Christian would welcome Jesus Christ. He wrote:

*“Let us open our eyes to the deifying light, let us hear with attentive ears the warning which the divine voice cries daily to us, ‘Today if you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.’”*

Our culture has been labeled “a culture of death”. I believe that much of the darkness that we see in our culture is rooted in our blindness to the sacred dignity of every human being. That sacred dignity has been given by God whose love is infinite, unconditional and eternal. We are asked to love each other in the same way God loves us. We do this imperfectly, which means there is always room for growth.

St. Benedict's call to love and welcome all people as Christ, offers a profound beacon of hope in the darkness of our world. Real hospitality goes far beyond the protocol of good manners and the custom of welcoming those with whom we feel comfortable, because Christ is present in saints and sinners alike. No matter how we sin, no matter how distant or lost we might be in our relationship with God, we are still beloved sons and daughters, because that is what God created us to be.

Radical hospitality is a challenge to us because it demands an openness to people, an openness we may have never had before. Hospitality means we have to be willing to accept and welcome into our lives, those we may have always wanted to keep at a distance from us.

I attended St. Meinrad School of Theology which is connected to St. Meinrad Archabbey, a Benedictine Monastery in Southern Indiana. In the spring of 1987 I was asked by one of the monks, who was the dean of students, to take more time away from school, because I was not ready for the Sacrament of Holy Orders, which was scheduled for the summer of 1988. I could tell this was a conversation my friend did not want to have with me. I could tell he had my best interest in mind. I could tell he was concerned about how difficult my life might have been if I had been ordained when I wanted to be. I will always be deeply grateful for the fact that he sat down with me and suggested that I take more time.

Over the years since I was ordained in May of 1991, I have traveled to St. Meinrad; the last time was in July of 2006. When Fr. Hagan saw me, he gave me his big Kentucky embrace, he asked me how I was doing, and he invited me to come to his office to visit with him. He encouraged me to celebrate Mass with the Monks each day, vested and sitting with them. I felt like I had been welcomed as Christ would be. It was one of the most humbling moments of my life.

As a culture, we have a lot to learn about what hospitality really means. I look forward to finishing my book this summer. I like to think I am open to welcoming people who come into my life, but there is always room to grow.

Now that it is summer, I hope you will all enjoy the warm weather that has finally arrived. Be safe, and know that I love you.

In joyful hope,  
Fr. Tim Seigel