

By Pat Haggerty

Summer is a time for outdoor barbecues, family reunions, boat rides with friends and drinks on the porch. It speaks to hanging out, just chilling and renewing connections with family and friends. The above activities mean that we have slowed down enough to make connections with others.

This calls to mind my favorite quote of all time: “The greatest gift we can give one another is rapt attention to one another’s existence.” (Sue Atchley Ebaugh). We can give the gift of time, the joy of refreshments and the true spirit of hospitality. It is the aspect of hospitality that is the most important.

To me, hospitality resonates with a certain openness and honesty. It says, “I want you to be with me/us and I want to listen to what you have to say.” We can prepare hot dogs on the grill or prepare fillet mignon for our guests. The question is---how do we serve the hot dogs or steak? Are we attentive to our guests? Are we good listeners? Do we show them kindness and patience? It takes a lot to be a good host.

Last Sunday’s readings truly speak to the issue of hospitality. In the first reading, Abraham goes out of his way to extend some hospitality to strangers. He invites them to clean up, drink and enjoy some refreshment. He even refers to himself as their servant. In the gospel reading, Jesus is visiting Martha and Mary. Martha acts as the hostess while Mary takes the time to be attentive to the Lord at his feet. I think we can see the true spirit of hospitality in a blending of both women’s approaches. There is a balance between Martha and Mary that we need to strive

for.

If we don't often find ourselves in the role of host or hostess, there are many ways that we can be hospitable. We can welcome a stranger into a group that we have formed; we can greet a newcomer to our church; we can include someone on the periphery in a discussion we are having. We can be open to those who are "different" from us and learn from them and their ways.

Let us be true servants for others. In serving others we open our hearts to them. We honor their presence and their existence. That is a huge gift! That is a Christ-like gift. As Richard Gillard writes in "The Servant Song": "We are pilgrims on a journey; We are trav'lers on the road; We are here to help each other walk the mile and bear the load."