



**EXPLORING THE THEOLOGY OF
HOSPITALITY IN CONVERSATION
WITH THE RULE OF ST. BENEDICT**

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Abstract

The genesis of hospitality has its long history and tradition. Throughout its global processes in academic discourse, hospitality has evolved as a hallmark for host-guest relationship as well as re-appropriation of its hermeneutics in a variety of contexts.

This paper focuses on finding out the perceptions and impact of hospitality in the religious life by applying the Rule of St. Benedict in a culturally diverse community of the Scalabrinians, also known as, Missionaries of St. Charles. It explores the correlation between the changing demographics of the Scalabrinian Order – its current picture as a religious community and how the Rule of St. Benedict on hospitality can fit in to the mainstream of their Founder's charism with the migrants. The study employs some pertinent materials generated and other sources to analyze the intersection between the perspectives on hospitality from the religious point of view and from other scholars in a post-modern society.

Findings reveal that interpretation of hospitality vary according to religious values and interdisciplinary perspectives. Some similarities and differences reflect the process of making the *Other* with a sense of availability, as well as, responsibility. This, however, embodies the corporate vision that makes every effort to see Christ in every person. Within this context, the theology of hospitality also utilizes a panoply of resources, including philosophy, ethics, anthropology, Christian tradition, social customs, political realities and biblical witness.

I. Introduction

In today's migration issues in the United States, the current discourse on hospitality continues to echo like the words in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* where Shylock, the Jew, apparently wishes to be made hospitable on a purely financial basis. He says,

“Yes, to smell pork, to eat of the habitation which your prophet the Nazarite conjured the devil into! I will buy with you, sell with you, talk with you, walk with you, and so following, but I will not eat with you, drink with you, nor pray with you.”¹ (1.3.28-32)

The language of commerce that *The Merchant of Venice* exhibits in a city where people can become friends for financial reasons alone permeates in a culture that is concerned with human meaning pertinent to moral or financial values. Its impact on hospitality reflects a challenge of boundaries implicit in our quest for total acceptance and in-depth guarantee of reciprocity.

As we deal with it, the social aspect of interacting and taking special care of people who need shelter or may be out of work, abandoned and impoverished, sets our focus on how we approach them. In fact, it brings to light the legacy of St. Benedict's monastic tradition of hospitality.

Evidently, hospitality given to the 'other' is an act of generosity. It exists within lived experience that evokes openness and accepting the 'other' on their terms that opens the host to new experiences – the possibility of 'crossing thresholds of hope.'² It keeps us focused on the divine presence and not on ourselves. When we receive a guest we receive mercy from God. For those only truly at home in themselves can offer genuine hospitality, which is not controlling, but welcomes as we are.

In Benedict's Rule, the central focus for religious hospitality in chapter 53, is entitled *De Hospitibus Suscipiendis*—The Reception of Guests. It says, “All guests who present themselves are to be welcomed as Christ, for he himself will say: I was a stranger and you welcomed me (Matt 25:35).”³

¹ Catherine Belsey, *Why Shakespeare?* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2007), 168. She gives a hardline reading of 'Cultural Difference' in *The Merchant of Venice*, the 'play that continues to haunt the imagination of the West', examining the 'hostility' generated by 'enforced integration and multiculturalism.

² John Paul II *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* (London, Alfred A Knopf 1994).

³ Cf. The Rule of St. Benedict in English, ed. Timothy Fry, O.S.B. (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1982), Chapter 53.1.

As a member of the religious order whose main charism deals with care for migrants, this study will examine the impact of hospitality that addresses issues of inclusion, perspectives, creativity, and its importance in the religious life by applying the Rule of St. Benedict in a culturally diverse community of the Scalabrinians, officially known as Missionaries of St. Charles. Hence, it will just be limited to interweave some pertinent materials generated or interact with what has been determined to be key sources to analyze the intersection between the perspectives on hospitality from the religious point of view and from other scholars in a post-modern society.

II. Background/Profile of the Scalabrinian Order

The Congregation of the Missionaries of St. Charles, also known as Scalabrinian Missionaries (abbreviated C.S.) was founded in the late nineteenth century (1887) by Blessed John Baptist Scalabrini, an Italian bishop of Piacenza. Blessed John Scalabrini was beatified on November 17, 1997. Its mission is to minister to migrants, refugees, deportees, and displaced people in various settings, e.g., in parishes, welcome centers (Casa del Migrante), centers for migration studies, diocesan offices for immigrants, apostleship of the sea, nursing homes, seminaries, and formation houses for cross-cultural students.

Scalabrini had all the Italian priests at the beginning of his foundation. He envisioned that members of his newly established community be flying missionaries; living in community but traveling widely to assist scattered migrant communities. He stationed his men not just in parishes but on the docks of port cities, such as Genoa and New York, to assist migrants in transit.⁴ In 1895, Scalabrini founded the Missionary Sisters of St. Charles Borromeo as an expansion of the ministry of congregations of women religious with the same charism to care for migrants.⁵ While accepting the separation of Church and state, Scalabrini argued that they could find common ground in the promotion of the common good.⁶ He

⁴ Roberto Italo Zanini, *By God's Own Power* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Sheridan Books, Inc., 2013), 2

⁵ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁶ *Ibid.*

organized lay catechists whose numbers soared to almost five thousand volunteers and began the ‘first Italian catechetical journal which was the second of its kind in the world.’⁷

At that time, Italy was in turmoil because of political division among leaders of the different provinces. Rome came into Italian possession in 1870, when the Franco-Prussian War compelled the retirement of the French garrison.⁸ John Scalabrini set up projects and asked Pope Leo XII to allow Catholics at least to take part in the political elections. He left no stone unturned in fulfilling his work to bring about reconciliation between the church and state.

In 1901, Scalabrini had a meeting with President Theodore Roosevelt to have an exchange views about the growing number of Italian immigrants nationwide. Scalabrini raised the issue of spiritual assistance to his own people as they settled gradually in their new home country of adoption. The President recognized the hard work and quick intelligence of the immigrants, their readiness even to undertake risky jobs, and acknowledged how much they had needed.⁹

Scalabrini saw migrations not as an isolated phenomenon, but as a more visible sign of the social question of his time, when workers and farmers were struggling to find a voice society.¹⁰ His missionary aim was to preserve the faith of the migrants and to develop their awareness and sense of responsibility to become witnesses and examples of Christian life in the new cities and new situations in their host countries.¹¹ Scalabrini answered a major social problem of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and anticipated the action of States by calling on them to exercise their responsibilities toward the masses emigrating from Europe.¹² Today, this is evident as the U.S. border gets its media coverage among migrants from Latin America who seek asylum and opportunity to find good quality of life.

By the beginning of the twenty-first century, the congregation began to expand its mission and found new vocations among those born and raised in ethnic communities, e.g., Italian-Americans,

⁷ Ephraim Lipson, *Europe in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Adam and Charles Black Publications, 1957), 159-160.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*, 5

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*, 9.

Brazilians and Argentines, or in new migrant nations, e.g., the Philippines, Mexico, Colombia, Guatemala, Honduras, Haiti, Indonesia, and Vietnam. The Scalabrinians' work continued to extend its services to migrants in parishes and welcome centers along the African and Mexican-American borders.¹³ In 2018, it counted more than 700 members who come from different ethnic backgrounds in 35 countries. With prophetic insight of the Founder, Scalabrinians across the world continue to walk with migrants with a moral dimension and dynamics tied to this aspect of hospitality.

II. Concept and Significance of Hospitality

Hospitality has a long history of tradition and the oldest collection of texts that refer to it are from a literary genre known as Ancient Near East texts.¹⁴ Its etymology with a Latin root *hospes*, which is a compound word made of *hostis*, which is either a guest or a host, and *pet-* or *pot-*, which is a master.¹⁵ It derives from two proto-Indo-European words that have the meanings of 'stranger', 'guest' and 'power'.¹⁶ *Hospes* later evolved into *hospitale* to mean a guest house or inn. In spite of the fact that hospitality is an underlying dimension of host-guest interactions in the tourism context,¹⁷ neither tourism nor hospitality studies have a definite answer about the meaning of hospitality.¹⁸ It has a multiplicity of definitions, especially to those in the modern, western world.

With migration patterns that have generated greater diversity in various institutions, hospitality has evolved in different perspectives. The American society, for instance, may exemplify what Parker Palmer coined as a "company of strangers."¹⁹ There are cross-cultural interactions and interpretations.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 3

¹⁴ Kevin D. O'Gorman, 'Dimensions of Hospitality: Exploring Ancient and Classical Origins.' *In Hospitality: A Social Lens*, ed. By Conrad Lashley, Paul Lynch and Alison Morrison (London, UK: Elsevier Ltd., 207), 18.

¹⁵ Quoted from Ksenia Kirllova, Alsu Gilmetdinova, Xinran Lehto, Interpretation of hospitality across religions. *International Journal of Hospitality Management* 43 (2014) 24, See: T. McNulty, *The Hostess: Hospitality, Femininity, and the Expropriation* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2006).

¹⁶ K. O'Gorman, 'Modern Hospitality: Lessons from the past' *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management* 12 (2) 2005, 141-151.

¹⁷ D. Heuman, Hospitality and reciprocity: working tourists in Domenica. *Ann Tour. Res.* 32 (2), 407-418.

¹⁸ B. Brotherton, *Towards a definitive view of the nature of hospitality and. Hospitality management.* *Int. J. Contemp. Hosp. Management* 11 (41), 165-173.

¹⁹ Parker Palmer, *The Company of Strangers: Christians and the Renewal of America's Public Life* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 7.

The Oxford Dictionary defines the word as “the friendly reception and entertaining of guests, visitors, guests, or stranger, and can suggest stranger as friend or foe.”²⁰ Richard Kearney and Kascha Semonovitch link hospitality to the understanding of the “Stranger” in their edited book, *Phenomenologies of the Stranger: Between Hostility and Hospitality*.²¹ They see hospitality emerge at the threshold, the place where we first encounter the Stranger.²² Oden, however, explains that with hospitality comes a readiness to enter another’s world and to cross into the unfamiliar.²³ She further describes the concepts of having, giving, and receiving. It recognizes both the need and full humanity of the stranger, along with a respectful balance.²⁴

Hospitality is a lively, courageous, and convivial way of living that challenges our compulsion either to turn away or to turn inward and disconnect ourselves from others.²⁵ As a culture, however, we are frightened people living behind locked doors, fashioning our homes as reclusive retreats from what we believe is a hostile world that drains us of the energies we most cherish.²⁶ As Derrida observes, there is always a little hostility in all hosting and hospitality, constituting what he called a certain ‘hostipitality’.²⁷

If I say ‘Welcome’, I am not renouncing my mastery, something that becomes transparent in people whose hospitality is a way of showing off how much they own or who make their guests uncomfortable and afraid to touch a thing.²⁸

Derrida also argues that hospitality is conditional in the sense that the outsider or foreigner has to meet the criteria of the a priori ‘other’, implying that hospitality is not given to a guest who is absolutely unknown or anonymous because the host has no idea of how they will respond.²⁹

²⁰ Christopher Yates, “Hospitality: Imagining the Stranger.” In *Religion and the Arts*, vol. 14, no. 5, 2010. (515-520).

²¹ Richard Kearney and Kascha Semonovitch, eds. *Phenomenologies of the Stranger: Between Hostility and Hospitality* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011), 4.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Amy G. Oden, *And You Welcomed Me: A Sourcebook on Hospitality in Early Christianity* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2010), 15.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 26.

²⁵ Daniel Homan and Lonni C. Pratt, *Radical Hospitality: Benedict’s Way of Love* (Orleans, MA: Paraclete Press, 2002), 9.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.

²⁷ Jacques Derrida, ‘Hostipitality’ *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* 5 (3) 2000, 3-18.

²⁸ J. D. Caputo, *Deconstruction In A Nutshell: A Conversation with Jacques Derrida* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), 111.

²⁹ Kevin O’Gorman, Jacques Derrida’s philosophy of hospitality *The Hospitality Review*, October 2006, 52.

Absolute hospitality requires that I open up my home and that I give not only to the foreigner (provided with a family name, with the social status of being a foreigner, etc.), but to the absolute, unknown, anonymous other, and that I give place to them, that I let them come, that I let them arrive, and take place in the place I offer them, without asking of them either reciprocity or even their names.³⁰

Henry Nouwen, on the one hand, often used hospitality as an open space.³¹ It is a space that fosters conversation, of giving and receiving from each other, of valuing and not minimizing of difference and that the host has the responsibility to initiate a conversation, a mutual exchange, with the guest.³²

Theologically, hospitality originates as welcome of the stranger or alien within Judeo-Christian tradition and scripture and it often includes sharing a meal and an exchange of material assistance or providing care.³³ This is the conventional understanding of hospitality. It involves an etiquette of the host who does everything in his ability to make the guest feel welcome, comfortable, and taken care of.

However, the location of hospitality and the Stranger does not have to be located only in the home either. Kearney and Semonovitch allude to Martin Heidegger's idea that calls this crossing of the familiar with the unfamiliar, the "uncanny."³⁴

III. Biblical Perspective on Hospitality in the context of human communication

A. Hospitality in the Old Testament

In the Book of Genesis, God offers the newly created world as living space and its plants and trees as food to all living creatures; they are to be guests in God's world and at God's table.³⁵ In other words, God's human guests are to preserve awareness of and respect God's ultimate ownership.³⁶

In the Old Testament, many laws specifically require hospitality and concern for strangers in particular:

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Henri Nouwen, *Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life* (New York: Doubleday, 1975).

³² Christine Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999).

³³ *Ibid.*, 6. See: Amy Oden, *And You Welcomed Me: A Sourcebook on Hospitality in Early Christianity* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2001), 14.

³⁴ Richard Kearney and Kascha Semonovitch, ed. *Phenomenologies of the Stranger: Between Hostility and Hospitality*, 4.

³⁵ Kevin d. O'Gorman, Dimensions of Hospitality: Exploring Ancient and Classical Origins. In *Hospitality – A Social Lens*. edit. by Conrad Lashley, Paul Lynch and Alison Morrison. (London: Taylor & Francis, Inc., 2007), 19.

³⁶ W. Janzen, Biblical theology of hospitality. *Vision, A Journal for Church and Theology*, 3 (1) 2002, 4-15.

“If you have resident strangers in your country, you will not molest them. You will treat resident strangers as though they were native-born and love them as yourself for you yourselves were once aliens in Egypt” (Leviticus, 19:33-34).

Other laws, often associated with those concerning strangers, assure good treatment of weak members of society, and laws concerning redemption follow in accordance with the spirit of hospitality.³⁷

This image of Israel as stranger holds its further depiction in Patrick Keifert’s work ‘*Welcoming the Stranger*.’ “Israel’s captivity in Egypt was described in the image of the stranger as well: ‘When an alien [RSV: stranger] resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God’ (Lev. 19:33- 34).”³⁸

Abraham serves as an example of biblical hospitality in Gen. 18:1-16. His encounter with three ‘men’ who turned out to be angels takes its notice not only in Scripture, but also in Jewish and Christian literature. Abraham shows hospitality to strangers. The Genesis text states that Abraham is sitting outside at the entrance to his tent, where he encounters three strangers who need help and, in response, Abraham offers help to these strangers by providing them with water, food and rest. Abraham initially did not know their identity, but simply offers help. Such hospitality, given in an attitude of honor and respect, was recognized as a sacred duty throughout the ancient eastern world.”³⁹

In return for Abraham’s kindness towards the strangers, he receives a confirmation that his wife Sarah will have a baby, the beginning of the fulfillment of God’s promise given to Abraham in Genesis 15:4-5. It is important to note that Abraham himself was a resident alien in the land. When Abraham first came to the land as a stranger, people accepted and treated him well.

³⁷ O’Gorman, *Dimensions of Hospitality*, 19.

³⁸ Patrick R. Keifert, *Welcoming the Stranger: A Public Theology of Worship and Evangelism* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 59.

³⁹ Christine D. Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1999), 28.

This focus on Abraham likely stems from three factors, (1) the status of Abraham in the biblical tradition, (2) the divinely ordered circumstances of Abraham's story and its resultant benefit to Abraham and (3) the completeness of the hospitality model that is displayed in the narrative.

Later, (Genesis 19:1-9) when the angels journeyed to Sodom and Gomorrah, in search of a righteous man, only Lot and his family were set apart to be saved.⁴⁰ Lot was deemed righteous, by the fact that he alone imitated Abraham's behavior of hospitality.⁴¹ In relation to hospitality, there is another well-known legend, the people of the city had a special bed - which they would offer to guests, and when the guests were too tall for the bed, they would cut off their feet and when they were too short, they would stretch their limbs.⁴²

Illustrative examples of the many other hospitality events would include the second book of Kings and it is an unusual example of peacemaking: the prophet Elisha, exhorts the king of Israel to treat his Syrian prisoners of war to a meal, then send them home (2 Kings, 6:22-23).⁴³ In the book of Job, when Job is swearing an oath of innocence, in his defense of his good life, listing all the sins he has not committed he places special emphasis on his practice of hospitality: "no stranger ever had to sleep outside, my door was always open to the traveler" (Job 31:32).⁴⁴ Additionally, when the Prophet Isaiah looks ahead to the end of time, he describes it as God's eschatological banquet "a banquet of rich food, a banquet of fine wines, of succulent food, of well-strained wines" (Isaiah 25:6-9). In the Old Testament, hospitality is central to virtually all of Old Testament ethics; God, the great host, invites his guests into his house, the created world, to enjoy its riches and blessings.⁴⁵ However, the duties of the guest are clear too, the host expects these guests to follow His example and share their livelihood and their life, with their fellow guests on His earth.⁴⁶

B. Hospitality in the New Testament

⁴⁰ O'Gorman, *Dimensions of Hospitality*, 20.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

The New Testament is replete with images and stories of guests received, both those already known as friends and those strangers who are taken in and transformed into guests.⁴⁷ Among nomadic tribes, the guest comes under the protection of the host, who guarantees inviolable safety.⁴⁸ The important elements of hospitality include the opportunity for cleansing dusty feet, scented oil to soften dried skin and mask odors of the road, food, shelter, security, and companionship.⁴⁹

When Jesus sends out disciples on mission, they are to lodge in the houses where they are welcomed. Jesus' vision of mission is impossible without this reciprocity, the reception of those who are sent by those who receive them (Matt 10:11, Mark 6:10, Luke 9:4, Luke 10:7-8).⁵⁰ In the case of hospitality refused, the disciples are to move on and continue their mission.

Matthew 25:34-43 belongs to the category of hospitality. According to these passages, hospitality is the key to the inheritance of the kingdom of God. In a similar vein, human beings are deemed blessed by God. However, it is only if they demonstrate hospitality through the following behaviors: a). to provide a hungry person with food; b). to provide a thirsty person with water; c). to let a stranger in; d). to provide a person with clothes; e). to visit a sick person; f). to visit a person in the prison.⁵¹

This means that, in contemporary religious practices, hospitality exemplifies its meaning as the provision a stranger with furtherance that satisfies the basic, or, in other words, the most primitive needs, such as the necessities in food, water and shelter. Thus, Matthew 25:40 clearly articulates that hospitality is a divine category and everyone who provides aid to other people has to consider him/her as a person that resembles Jesus Christ. Jesus is direct in His explanations. He states that: "Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto me."

⁴⁷<https://www.bibleodyssey.org:443/en/passages/related-articles/hospitality-in-the-new-testament> Accessed April 26, 2019

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Robert J Karris, *The Collegeville Bible Commentary: New Testament* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press), 885-886.

The many stories of banquets in the Gospels presuppose the practice of hospitality for important events and transition moments: for example, the great dinner (Matt. 22:1-10; Luke 14:15-24) or the celebration of the return of the younger son (Luke 15:22-32). These banquets in biblical perspective open horizons toward the kingdom of heaven. How is ultimate happiness imagined—as a banquet in which everyone is happy and fulfilled (Luke 22:30), or as the celebration of a marriage (Rev. 19:9)?

Jesus is himself the significant guest in the Gospels. There is a wrong way to receive him, typified by Simon the Pharisee, who treats him poorly by offering neither water for foot washing nor oil for anointing nor gesture of welcome, while the “sinner” woman who enters uninvited receives him correctly (Luke 7:36-50).⁵² Martha and Mary do not offer the perfect reception, however, for in this intimate place among friends that should feel comfortably familiar, Jesus is brought into a home where there is some underlying family tension (Luke 10:38-42).⁵³

Later, Paul and other itinerant missionaries rely on the hospitality of those who receive them as they journey from city to city. The Lord’s Supper took place primarily, though not exclusively, in private homes that would become centers of hospitality and evangelization. At Philippi, Lydia, a merchant of purple cloth, is mesmerized by Paul’s preaching and insists that he accept her hospitality in her home that will become a center of faith (Acts 16:14-15, Acts 16:40). In the miraculous nocturnal delivery of Paul and Silas from prison in Philippi, the jailer, himself saved from suicide by Paul’s quick action, responds by taking them into his own home, where in the middle of the night he and his household give the apostles medical attention and food (Acts 16:29-34). Here, hospitality is the expression of a desire to repair the damage of the past and continue the relationship.⁵⁴

The hearers of the Letter to the Hebrews learn about the importance of practicing hospitality: some receive angels without knowing (Heb. 13:2; compare Gen 18:1-15). Sometimes it goes wrong: the

⁵² Carolyn Osiek, “Hospitality in the New Testament”, n.p. [cited April 26, 2019]. Accessed April 26, 2019.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

author of 3 John 9 has a hospitality problem: the house of Diotrephes will not receive the emissaries sent from the author—for what reason, we do not know.⁵⁵

IV. Contributions by Contemporary Scholars to Hospitality

For centuries, hospitality has been plunged into all cultures. Within the Christian tradition particularly in monasteries, the question on how one communicates and welcomes the stranger is indicative of the moral trait of the host. In her book, *The Human Condition*, Hannah Arendt describes how the human family holds the beginning and from there a collective of families turn into a super family, which is what we call society.⁵⁶ One can have the “good life” if he or she is able to master the necessities of life in the household.⁵⁷

One of the necessities of life is also to welcome others into one’s household. Using what Arendt has established one might believe that a way to incorporate the good of a Christian life and still to have what is essential to human life through socialization is through hospitality. Arendt indicates the coincidence of the rise of society with the decline of the family to show how the family unit is absorbed into corresponding social groups.⁵⁸ However, with technology this absorption has not made a positive impact. Using what Arendt has established, one might believe that a way to incorporate the good of a Christian life and still to have what is essential to human life through socialization is through hospitality.

Another scholar, Jacques Derrida, discusses hospitality at length in his work *Of Hospitality*. In this book, Derrida explains hospitality in terms of the foreigner and the initial contact with a stranger, foreigner or *Other*. On the one hand, there is tension that must exist where one is welcoming and allowing another into his or her home, but at the same time staying in control. Hospitality also includes limits or borders that the guest cannot pass. Derrida says it is nearly impossible for complete hospitality to take place. He describes it as a puzzle or paradox (*aporia*) because one would essentially have to

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 29.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 40.

abandon all claims to the property leaving the host unable to be hospitable since one needs ownership to offer hospitality.⁵⁹

Jacques Derrida, like Levinas a French Jew and phenomenologist, pushed Levinas to translate the name of God into a politics of hospitality, to understand hospitality in terms of the laws and policies that determine the welcome offered by the nation to the refugees and migrant workers from other places. This would require that borders, the boundaries between two places would become porous, and eventually our ethos, our national and cultural –self-understanding.

Derrida's *Adieu à Emmanuel Levinas*'s *Totality and Infinity* contains a summary and explanation of Levinas's *Totality and Infinity* as a great treatise on hospitality.

Furthermore, there are many current scholars relevant to communication that are working with content that deals with hospitality. These scholars include Richard Kearney, Brian Treanor, Boyd Blundell, Thomas Ogletree, and Edward Casey. These writers discuss various viewpoints of hospitality, whether it is through how we see strangers, our social responsibilities, or where we need to be as individuals in order to offer hospitality.

Richard Kearney is one of the leading researchers and scholars studying the impact and use of hospitality within communication. He has worked on several projects that have suggested the overall importance and impact hospitality has on communication, in particular, how we view the Stranger. These projects include two books, *Phenomenologies of the Stranger: Between Hostility and Hospitality*, and *Anatheism*, as well as *the Guestbook Project*, an international project that “transforms hostility into hospitality, enmity into empathy, conflict into conversation.”⁶⁰

From his books we gain an understanding of looking at hospitality not just through the lens of inviting a guest into our home, but as an overarching theme of having the social responsibility to welcome strangers and what it means to the world around us phenomenologically. Kearney explains in *Anatheism*

⁵⁹ Jacques Derrida, *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas* (California: Stanford University Press, 1999), 65.

⁶⁰ www.Guestbookproject.org. StoryCenter.org, 2017. Accessed April 27, 2019.

that we have become vacant and “unavailable” to our neighbors and to anyone. He makes a call for us to reignite the hospitable nature of our being so that we can fulfill our duty as humans to one another.⁶¹

One of the main themes within scholarly work in communication is the connection between the stranger and hospitality. Boyd Blundell traces this theme and its roots as he writes about Kearney’s work as well as Kearney’s mentor, Paul Ricoeur, and Ricoeur’s mentor Gabriel Marcel in his article “Unavailability: When Neighbors Become Strangers.” It is in this article that one can learn about Marcel’s philosophical reflection that leads him to propose a second reflection as a way of avoiding the “spirit of abstraction.”⁶² The second reflection cultivates “availability” according to Marcel, which he sees as a virtue.⁶³ The article then goes on to explain our unwillingness to be available or even our lack of availability to be a strain in being able to offer hospitality, especially when it concerns the neighbor.

Brian Treanor also uses Kearney’s work to discuss more about hospitality in his article, “The Atheistic Wager: Faith after Faith.”⁶⁴ He refers hospitality back to Kearney who states that the love of the stranger is a form of “faith seeking knowledge” and that we begin with the “presumption of love rather than fear, and welcome rather than refusal.”⁶⁵ He goes on to quote Kearney from his book *Anatheism: Returning to God After God* by writing, “We might open our arms, our homes, or our communities to someone we should have avoided. “But such risk is not groundless. Love – as compassion and justice – is the watermark. There is a discernible difference between one who gives water to the thirsty and one who does not, between one who heals and one who maims, between one who hosts and one who shuts the door.”⁶⁶

From another perspective, communication scholars have recognized that the only way to be able to offer hospitality truly is to be implaced, or not displaced. Treanor discusses this concept at length in

⁶¹ Richard Kearney, *Anatheism: Returning to God after God*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 29.

⁶² Boyd Blundell, Unavailability: When Neighbors Become Strangers. *Religion and the Arts* 14, 560-571. January 2010.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 556.

⁶⁴ Kearney, *Anatheism*, 29.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 558.

⁶⁶ Richard Kearney, *Anatheism: Returning to God after God* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 47.

his article “Putting Hospitality in Its Place” that was a chapter within, *Phenomenologies of the Stranger* edited by Kearney and Kascha Semonovitch. He states: “Hospitality is a virtue of place, perhaps the preeminent virtue of place. Indeed, hospitality is so deeply connected to place that it is defined by the Association.”⁶⁷ Treanor clearly discusses how if one does not feel settled in his or her own space then he or she cannot offer the warmth and hospitality to another.

Ed Casey also discusses the issue of hospitality in his book *Getting Back into Place*. He describes place as a space where one lives, and which ultimately becomes a part of his identity – the home.⁶⁸ Casey continues on to explain how our personality and traits may dictate where we choose to live just as the place in which we live shapes who we are. Casey goes on to describe that places are experienced space of a certain sort and have a cultural dimension.⁶⁹

We strive to achieve an orientation that allows us to settle and feel situated.⁷⁰ We look to things within nature and within things that we create, such as our house. Many homes are built according to the movement of the body or the person who inhabits them. If a home is extremely unorganized and designed poorly for the individual inside of it, that person may nonetheless, be affected with discomfort.

Since hospitality cannot exist with displaced persons, then it is important to understand who is displaced and why.⁷¹ Treanor identifies God with place and describes how all people were born to a specific place and have lived in different places throughout their lives. However, it is not just about the place; it is about our experiences at the place, which is how we can understand hospitality.⁷²

Thomas W. Ogletree takes a unique approach to hospitality in his book, *Hospitality to the Stranger – Dimensions of Moral Understanding*. Ogletree explains that there are different levels of

⁶⁷ Brian Treanor, *Phenomenologies of the Stranger Between Hostility and Hospitality*. Richard Kearney and Kascha Semonovitch eds. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011), 50.

⁶⁸ Edward S. Casey, *Getting Back into Place: Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-World* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1993), 22.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ Brian Treanor, *Phenomenologies of the Stranger*, 54.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 55.

authority between the host and the stranger.⁷³ He states that it begins with an *inequality* of power in the relationship with the power initially with the host. He explains that the stranger is vulnerable and needs the service of the host.⁷⁴ The host is in his/her own world and has access to support systems. The stranger does not know what to expect and is unfamiliar with the surroundings. However, the stranger can begin to tell stories; enjoys a level of authority because he is the expert. Ogletree then goes on to explain the equality of the host and the stranger. One has to be ready to welcome another when one is ready to enter the Other's world. This brings about the question on how to make ourselves ready to welcome the stranger.

There are many obstacles to overcome when considering hospitality. These writers in communication have considered that hospitality is part of our social responsibility. Either one has a religious position or a philosophical viewpoint, helping a stranger brings goodness and joy to one's heart. As a person he/she may reckon that hospitality is a call to care about his/her neighbors and strangers.

Writing in France from 1935 until his death in 1995, Emmanuel Levinas challenged contemporary philosophy by beginning not with the *Self* but with the *Other*. His sense of being-in-the-world-with-others remains the centerpiece of his philosophy. The desire calls one to a sense of responsibility to the other. This is the outward movement that turns us inside out in our attempt to offer ourselves to that responsibility.⁷⁵ Although he was not religious, and at times, it seemed he could "rightly pass for an atheist,"⁷⁶ still he displays a strong awareness of the God of Judaism. He comments on the Talmud in *Nine Talmudic Readings*, discusses messianic politics in *Beyond the Verse*, undertook the project of translating the Torah into French, and hears in the face-to-face encounter with the *Other* the commandment, "Thou shall not kill." This dictum comes from the "Time of the Nations," the time

⁷³ Thomas W. Ogletree, *Hospitality to the Stranger: Dimensions of Moral Understanding*. (Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 4.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ Jeffrey Bloechl, "Ethics as First Philosophy and Religion," In *The Face of the Other & The Trace of God*. ed. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000), 145.

⁷⁶ John D. Caputo, "Adieu — sans Dieu: Derrida and Levinas," in *The Face of the Other & The Trace of God*, ed. Jeffrey Bloechl (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000), 300.

before Sinai when there was nonetheless a recognition of the Torah.⁷⁷ There is an acknowledgment of the presence of the *Other* and the importance of the relation with the Other. For Levinas, this relationship - ethics - is how we come to know ourselves. Action (response to the *Other*) therefore precedes knowledge. “If the face of my neighbor opens me to a relation anterior to my relation with myself, and thus to a responsibility to him before and beyond everything I can orient to myself, how then am I to live by that insight? Our sense of responsibility gets awakened by the awareness of a similarity, some sense in which the other is like me. What will comprise a good response, a response that is at one and the same time for the other person and true to my (ethical) self?”⁷⁸ Levinas expressed this relation in terms of the face of the *Other*, a face that recalls me to my original responsibility and bestows upon me my identity as a Being for-the-Other.⁷⁹

V. The Rule of St. Benedict and Hospitality

Chapter 53 titled as “*The Reception of Guests*” is the main chapter on hospitality. The chapter begins by stating that “*All guests who present themselves are to be welcomed as Christ, who said ‘I was a stranger and you welcomed me’ (Matthew 25:35).*” This is the pillar of Benedictine life and spirituality because Saint Benedict is asking those who read the text to see Christ’s reflection in the people that we meet. One may expect seclusion when we think of a monastery. However, this chapter changes that perspective. It has made the monastery a place of welcome and acceptance. Then the text continues to explain that, once the guests arrive, the abbot and the community are to meet the stranger. First, they will pray together and then have a kiss of peace. As far as Benedictines are concerned, this chapter gets its importance and sees hospitality as a form of worship and part of spirituality.

Joan Chittister gives an analysis of the chapter in her book *The Rule of Saint Benedict: Insights for the Ages*. She writes that hospitality is part of the wholeness that is the *Rule of Saint Benedict*. She

⁷⁷ Jacques Derrida, *Adieu à Emmanuel Levinas*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 119.

⁷⁸ Jeffrey Bloechl, "Ethics as First Philosophy and Religion," in *The Face of the Other & The Trace of God*, ed. Jeffrey Bloechl (New York: Fordham Press, 2000), 137.

⁷⁹ Jeffrey Bloechl, "Ethics as First Philosophy and Religion," 146.

states that the message to the stranger is clear. “Come right in and disturb our perfect lives. You are the Christ for us today.”⁸⁰ This message helps put into perspective how we should approach a similar situation in our lives today. Do we greet people we meet on campus? Do we talk to people we meet in church or in public? Do we invite neighbors into our homes on special occasions such as birthday party, death anniversary of a loved one, or summer cook out in the yard?

Chittister states that Benedict wants us to let the barriers of our hearts down so that the unexpected can come in “All humility that needs to be shown in addressing a guest on arrival or departure. By a bow of the head or by a complete prostration of the body, Christ is to be adored and welcomed in them.”⁸¹ Humility is also a component of the *Rule of St. Benedict*. Humility claims its role in order to recognize the stranger. In return, the Benedictine hospitality gives the guest physical comfort as well as spiritual instruction and human support. “Benedictine hospitality is not simply bed and bath; it is home and family.”⁸² Benedict attempts to teach us how to learn from one another by focusing on the other entirely. “Great care and concern are to be shown in receiving poor people and pilgrims, because in them more particularly Christ is received; our very awe of the rich guarantees them special respect.”⁸³ This aspect of Benedictine hospitality introduces those marginal in society.

Christine Pohl recognizes this in her book, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition*. Pohl states that strangers that are marginal in society such as homeless, refugees, migrants, and persons with severe disabilities desperately need hospitality and can benefit greatly from receiving a warm welcome, but it does not have to be that these people have the hardest circumstances either.⁸⁴ Hospitality can bring connections, community, comfort and a place where they feel companionship, recognition, and care.⁸⁵ Pohl sees hospitality as multilayered because those that are marginal have such a

⁸⁰ Joan Chittister, *The Rule of Benedict: Insights for the Ages*. (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 141.

⁸¹ Terrence G. Kardong, *Benedict's Rule: A Translation and Commentary*. (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1981), 420.

⁸² Chittister, 142.

⁸³ Kardong, *Benedict's Rule*, 420.

⁸⁴ Christine D. Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition*. (Grand Rapids MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 101.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

wide array of needs. Once that door is open to everyone, the guest become increasingly diverse yet equips us to open the door wider and more often with less fear and with more confidence.⁸⁶

Following that, the rule continues to point out that the kitchen for the guest and for the abbot is separate so as not to disrupt the community.⁸⁷ The guest quarters are to be entrusted to one God-fearing member where there is adequate bedding.⁸⁸ This part of the chapter that helps to give balance to the life of a monk – something that Benedict always makes a priority.

At a time when travel through Europe became risky, hostile and difficult, monasteries became the refuge where anyone would have a chance for accommodation at any time. As a result, Benedict did not want the monks to lose their values and structures of their lives. Ergo, he took into consideration a system where only certain monks had the responsibility to care for the guests so that others could have their schedule followed smoothly. Benedict commands that if we become less, then we can be no gift for the guest at all.⁸⁹ “The Hospitality that Benedict teaches is not a social event but a holy event,”⁹⁰ wrote Verna A. Holyhead and Lynne Muir in their book, *The Gift of Saint Benedict*. They continue on to describe Chapter 53 in the *Rule of Saint Benedict* as something that is familiar to most of us and that is homelessness and loneliness.⁹¹ “In each of us there is some inner homelessness, some alienation from ourselves and one another which longs for a welcome.”⁹² Holyhead and Muir reaffirm that Benedict realizes what an imposition or disruption it might be to stop one’s daily tasks and tend to the stranger. However, in Benedict’s eyes, the person who has no time for others has no time for God.⁹³ Instead, Benedict calls his monks to “become shelter to one another, accepting each other with their differences of personality, gifts, and physical resources” and thereby not remaining strangers.⁹⁴ Although, Benedict focuses on his monks, these guidelines can be applicable to any person within a community. Moreover,

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 103.

⁸⁷ Kardong, *Benedict’s Rule*, 420.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ Verna A. Holyhead and Lynne Muir, *The Gift of Saint Benedict* (Notre Dame, Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 2001), 92.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 93.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 92.

hospitality is an integral part of being in the world with others; it keeps us focused God's way with the world in Christ. It also allows the individual to situate himself in the encompassing context of the sacred household being mindful of others who may need food, shelter, or a space for listening.

Chapter 56, *The Prioress's or Abbot's Table*, also belongs to the category of hospitality. It is a short chapter that reminds anyone who may read it that the leader of the community is expected "to model the gift of self with strangers" according to Chittister.⁹⁵ "Hospitality in the Benedictine community was attention and presence to the needs of the other. Hospitality was a public ministry designed to nourish the other in body and in soul, in spirit and in psyche."⁹⁶ It is here that Chittister adds that "so often when we donate to the poor or give handouts that there is rarely a personal moment of connection. Benedictines do not just offer a bed and food, but conversation and respect – all things that make a human being human."⁹⁷

Chapter 61 "*The Reception of Visiting Monastics*" looks at hospitality in a way that is different from the other chapters in that it looks at welcoming monks or nuns from far away. Benedict wants monasteries to welcome those who have traveled from other monasteries and receive them for as long as they wish to stay. There are standards that must conform to the Order in dealing with monks and nuns from other monasteries. Because not all monasteries share the same rules with Benedict, it is implicit in the religious community to accept the strangers, but also not to allow any sense of arrogance or bad habits. If the traveler embraces the rules of the monastery then it would be possible to allow him to become a member, but only if he gets approval or recommendation from the superior.⁹⁸

Chapter 66 "*The Porter of the Monastery*" also pertains to hospitality. The Porter is responsible for taking messages, relaying or delivering replies, and is always on hand to answer anyone who comes to the entrance.⁹⁹ The Porter is required to say "Thanks be to God" or "Bless me" in response to a knock or call.¹⁰⁰ Many may wonder why it is important to answer a door. Saint Benedict wants the Porter to be

⁹⁵ Chittister, *The Rule of Benedict: Insights for the Ages*, 148.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 149.

⁹⁸ Kardong, 498.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 556.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

always available and not “roaming around.”¹⁰¹ Benedict does not want anyone to think he is coming out of time at the monastery. Therefore, someone will always be there to wait or to be of assistance. Salvation and spirituality do not belong to religious gyrations alone according to Chittister. “They are in the other and our response to those is infinitely more important than our religious exercises.”¹⁰²

VI. Addressing the Rule of St. Benedict to highlight Hospitality in the Scalabrinian Community

The text of the Rule of St. Benedict is short and simple to read, but may be difficult to apply to the present age without some interpretation. As prescribed in Benedict’s Rule, welcoming the stranger has remained a key component of Benedictine Monasticism into the present, and contemporary Benedictines describe hospitality as central to their communities. The Rule that addresses visitors (61. 1-4; 66. 1-4) makes clear that receiving the guest is a religious practice for Benedict.¹⁰³

Central to the Benedictine account of hospitality is the sacramental encounter of the host and guest. Christ comes as a guest. Hence, to receive the guest is to receive Christ, and through Christ, God. Because of the sacramental presence of Christ, all hospitable interactions form together with religious significance.¹⁰⁴ However, the question for those seeking to be hospitable is, “Do we see Christ in them? Do we see Christ in us?”¹⁰⁵ This is really a challenge on how to guide the life of the community and foster its sacramental imagination. By seeing the divine indwelling in every human person, we affirm the humanity of the person as a reflection of the divine. Being human, there are times that we struggle to recognize and respect the divine in the other and allow the divine in us be seen, as well

The Scalabrinian Missionaries work with immigrants in various apostolates across the world. For them, hospitality is a community priority; a Christian virtue; and a sacred encounter that grounds its practice in spirituality. Some of them who have been in the mission for many years claim that hospitality

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 556.

¹⁰² Chittister, *The Rule of Benedict: Insights for the Ages*, 171.

¹⁰³ In RB 61. 1-4, Benedict also addresses the issue of travelling monks.

¹⁰⁴ Aquinata, Böckmann, *Perspectives on the Rule of St. Benedict: Expanding Our Hearts in Christ*.

Translated by Marianne Burkhard (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2005), 168, 176.

¹⁰⁵ Esther de Waal, *Seeking God: The Way of St. Benedict* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2001), 121.

is an attitude, not just a matter of praxis, but an attitude of openness to others; a welcoming culture where listening lies at its core. Benedict writes in the prologue, “Listen, O my son, to teachings of your master, and turn to them with the ear of your heart. . .” (RB, Prol. 1). Immediately, one can see Benedict’s call as a reflection of the Parable of the Sower, but his commitment to listening goes far behind those words. It enshrouds the entire rule to pay attention to God and pay attention to others, especially the sick, the poor, the pilgrim, the guest, and the stranger. With definitive direction and ordered way of life, St. Benedict’s pedagogy on Hospitality reflects that inner attitude towards God and neighbor. It embodies the corporate vision that makes every effort to see Christ in each person.

Furthermore, it is not only the call to listen but also an explanation of the “full significance of listening: complete attention of the whole person; good will; implementation.”¹⁰⁶ According to Scripture, authentic listening must include all three of these characteristics: awareness, understanding and action.¹⁰⁷ Some see hospitality as a ministry of presence. They are honest enough to say that they do not do much. It is opening one’s heart and minds to whoever comes to them and seeing in him/her the gift of the other person.

Hospitality and community need each other. However, it is the practice of a community to open up itself outward. A basic example states that if we are not hospitable to each other, how can we be hospitable to the rest of the community and the world at large.

With the vision of church that was integral to Vatican II that moved from a static worldview to a more dynamic approach of connectedness to and service of the world as Yves Congar noted,¹⁰⁸ changes were an important step in learning to reflect hospitality to one another. Religious members were encouraged to talk at table to show fraternal relations and caring presence to one another, and to share about their lives and experiences on a personal level. Learning to be a community was a significant step

¹⁰⁶ Terence Kardong and Benedict, *Benedict’s Rule: A Translation and Commentary* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996), 5.

¹⁰⁷ Scott McKnight, *The Blue Parakeet: Rethinking How Your Read the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), Kindle, 98.

¹⁰⁸ Quoted in Massimo Faggioli, “The Battle over *Gaudium et Spes*, Then and Now: Dialogue with the Modern World,” *Origins* 42 (2013) 545-51, at 551 n. 16. See: MaryAnne Confoy, R.S.C. Religious Life in the Vatican II Era: “State of Perfection” or Living Charism? *Theological Studies*; June 2013, 74, 2; p. 322.

towards learning to be hospitable. After all, we could not be hospitable to guests if we were not hospitable to one another. How to live as a community is an initial step toward offering hospitality.

Our life as religious is a prophetic witness to a way that life can be in terms of living together and sharing our resources with justice and equality. A community is essential to the practice of hospitality since without a community, there is no space for the other to be welcomed.

In a community or in families too, we need to respect the needs of others. They are shown in different ways such as the need for sleep, more space or room for improvement, special consideration for failure to do household chores, for spiritual support, whatever it may be. St. Benedict chose it in so many ways, as an important way of living any life. The practice of hospitality is a practice of community life.

Diversity in the Scalabrinian community provides a number of principles for the practice of hospitality. These are the following: the importance of prioritizing hospitality as implied in the charism of the Order, the influence of hospitable spaces, the sacramental presence of God in hospitality, the role of spirituality in the practice of hospitality, and community life as the source and strength of hospitable way of living. In hospitality, the divine indwelling and the ordinary intersect to unfold the presence of God.

Following this, the Catholic Church in the U.S. also embraces the diversity of cultures. “About seventeen million Catholics in the United States are immigrants, exiles, or refugees.”¹⁰⁹ They account for 71 percent of growth of U.S. Catholicism since 1960.¹¹⁰ “The Roman Catholic Church in the United States is the most ethnically and racially diverse national ecclesial body in the world.”¹¹¹ Reconnecting the everyday life events through hospitable acts of a culturally diverse church, for instance, with our experience of God is also a sacrament. Gudorf writes:

The sacraments should not draw our attention away from “ordinary” human life, but should transform “ordinary” life by causing us to understand it more deeply.^{112\}

¹⁰⁹ Hosffman Ospino, *Interculturalism and Catechesis: A Catechist's Guide to Responding to Cultural Diversity* (New London, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 2017), 17.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹¹¹ Timothy Matovina, *Latino Catholicism: Transformation in America's Largest Church* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2012), 38.

¹¹² Christine Gudorf, “The Power to Create: Sacraments and Men's Need to Birth,” *Horizons* 14 no. 2(1987), 305.

Attentiveness is essential in working with poor immigrants as this exemplifies one possible example of a sacrament of hospitality. Without that concern to their needs, we miss opportunities to participate in hospitable relations and to experience God's presence in hospitality. David Tracy describes the sacramental orientation of faith under the category of "manifestation." This faith paradigm underscores sacrament, illumination, participation, etc. and in connection with this analogical relationship, all is grace.¹¹³ Understanding hospitality as a sacrament strengthens the spiritual significance of hospitality. Through this practice, we experience the theological heart of hospitality: the sacramental encounter. Its sacramentality hallows everyday life as the possible locus of God's presence. To borrow the phrase from Ignatian spirituality, as Michael Himes does, "the sacramentality that encounters the presence of God is the practice of "finding God in all things."¹¹⁴

French Benedictine Pierre-François de B  thune writes in his essay on hospitality in the interreligious encounter says: "Hospitality is the step that is taken in order to humanize the meeting between strangers."¹¹⁵ Hospitality welcomes strangers and makes them human to each other. The human element of hospitality can be interpreted through Irenaeus of Lyons's famous quotation, "*Gloria dei homo vivens*, (the glory of God is the human fully alive).

One of the difficulties we encounter as missionaries working with the poor is to convince them that God loves them. We refer in particular to those who are always afflicted with misfortunes, tragedies or miseries of life. There are times that we have the difficulty to explain to them why such things happen. While God stands out in our spirituality as compassionate, casting God as the poor stranger recognizes God's choice for the poor and affinity with the weak and vulnerable. This image of God opens our minds to keep our community continuously open to God's presence and this involves our ideas of God,

¹¹³ David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (New York: Crossroad, 1998), chapter 9.

¹¹⁴ Michael Himes, "Finding God in All Things: A Sacramental Worldview and its Effects," in *As Leaven in the World: Catholic Perspective on Faith, Vocation, and the Intellectual Life*, ed. Thomas Laudy (Franklin, WI: Sheed and Ward, 2001).

¹¹⁵ Pierre-Fran  ois de B  thune, "Interreligious Dialogue and Sacred Hospitality," *Religion East and West* 7 (2007): 3. B  thune served from 1992 to 2007 as the Secretary General for the Monastic Interreligious Dialogue. See also his books: *By Faith and Hospitality: The Monastic Tradition as a Model for Interreligious Encounter and Interreligious Hospitality* (Leominster: Gracewing, 2002).

addressing power inequalities, generation gap between the old and new members, our sense of focus on things instead of people, particularly the poor. Many a time, our religious communities problematically participate in power and prestige. They become markers of status rather than places of humble abodes. At times we get invited by the rich and generous families who can afford to take us out for a meal or host them in our place, while the poor frequently cannot afford and are often labeled as merely the recipients of hospitality. As a reality of structures of power inequality in the community, we must hospitably engage the power of the home with preferential option for poor people. Besides the poor, Benedict is also very solicitous of travelers (“pilgrims”): Great care and concern are to be shown in receiving poor people and pilgrims, because in them more particularly Christ is received. . .” (53.15).¹¹⁶

Derrida, however, says it is nearly impossible for complete hospitality to take place. He describes it as a puzzle or paradox (*aporia*) because one would essentially have to abandon all claims to the property leaving the host unable to be hospitable since one needs ownership to offer hospitality.¹¹⁷

Blessed Scalabrini, our Founder, embodied many of the practices of hospitality such as challenging religious household vision for the mission, inviting strangers, handicapped, poor Italian immigrants, living simply so that he could give witness to others, doing pastoral visits to parishes and missions overseas, etc. Like Dorothy Day’s vision of hospitality, Blessed Scalabrini engaged in meeting the needs of the poor immigrants and provided formation for his future missionaries. Blessed Scalabrini’s inspiring narratives of home dwelling for his religious foundation, the deaf and dumb girls, and the sisters are not found in exceptional moments or dramatic result of a miracle, but in the slow passage of time, characterized by the ups and downs of life. As Elizabeth Johnson writes, God’s presence in the world is that “ordinary people in ordinary time.”¹¹⁸

VI. The Need for Hospitality and Integration in the Religious Life

¹¹⁶ Cf. Aaron Raverty, ‘Hospitality in the Benedictine Monastic Tradition’ 252*Brasilia*, Ano XX, no. 38, Jan/Jun. 2012,

¹¹⁷ Jacques Derrida, *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas* (California: Stanford University Press, 1999), 65.

¹¹⁸ Elizabeth Johnson, *Friends of God and Prophets: A Feminist Theological Reading of the Communion of Saints* (New York: Continuum, 1998), 228.

Drawing upon cultural studies and socio-historical contexts, hospitality can bear on some of the most pressing issues of our time. While communication can be difficult at times because of complexity of certain issues like international migration or distinctiveness of each individual context, an invitation into the community may involve a creation of cultural worldviews that would help each member to understand the most fundamental and encompassing worldview that are shared by people in common cultures.

Each community recreates itself (and its worldview), often changing in the process, through social interaction.¹¹⁹ They are the metaphors and stories in that process that provides a framework by which people make sense of their lives.¹²⁰ Inclusion of the voices of individual members can empower the representation of who the guest or stranger is. For the Scalabrinian missionaries, the practice and integration of hospitality in the community reflects a paradigm for the representation of migrants, refugees, deportees, and asylum seekers with care and shelter staff in our *Casas del Migrante*. These institutions/dormitories provide adequate training programs and other resources for volunteers and staff to meet the needs of immigrants and migrants.

There are also a number of religious communities where the practice of hospitality is central to their mission. The Catholic Worker Movement begun by Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin, intentional community models in what is now commonly referred to as New Monasticism,¹²¹ and the *L'Arche* communities started by Jean Vanier, meet the needs of the poor.¹²² The Salesians, Good Shepherd Sisters, Comboni Missionaries, Xaverians, and many others have also emphasis on hospitality, particularly with those who need help or disenfranchised in society. This vision of solidarity with the poor through home dwelling is an extraordinary example of hospitality in action.

Hospitality has a multi-layered significance that articulates its role, impact, dynamics, and diversity within the lives and living contexts of religious members. Religious communities engaged in

¹¹⁹ Paul Hiebert, *Transforming worldviews: An Anthropological View of How People Change* (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 2008).

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ See Dorothy Day, *Loaves and Fishes* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1963; reprint, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997).

¹²² Jean Vanier, *Our Journal Home: Rediscovering a Common Humanity Beyond Our Differences*, trans. Maggie Parkam (Maryknoll, NY: Novalis/Orbis, 1997).

education, healthcare, retreats, grassroots ministry, or social justice can take part in the contemporary embodiments of the practice of hospitality through creativity in their mission. We usually think or equate hospitality with overnight accommodations found in a commercial hotel, or bed and breakfast. We do not label ourselves as a “stranger” but more as a visitor, traveler, or guest.

Clearly, hospitality provides a framework by which members of the community can engage its metaphor in the human process. Although some religious orders may not directly be involved with migrants or have a specific charism for that. However, hospitality is multi-layered in scope that emerges from the analysis and forms, which range from the material to the ethical and to the imaginative. It may involve an action (a welcome), an attitude (the opening of oneself to the face of another and the opening of one’s door or offering of the space), but much of our understanding of things in this world, including social life is based upon, and reflected, through various metaphors.

Shakespeare also used metaphors in his plays, like for example, in *The Tempest* and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. He used life, time, and the meaning of God’s creation. Being a country boy his metaphors often evoke the social milieu with pastoral images and beauty of nature. He writes, for instance, that ‘life is a dream in which we can never be sure of what’s real and what isn’t.’¹²³ Prospero believes that the world will one day disappear into thin air, just as dreams do (*Midsummer*, 4.1.156).¹²⁴

Metaphors enable us ‘to understand the kind of object or idea used in place of another to suggest a likeness or analogy between them.’¹²⁵ Several studies have engaged the metaphor of hospitality and identified not only its materiality and hospitableness (hosting and welcoming of disciplines) but also the welcoming of new ideas (the hospitality of knowledge), virtual academic hospitality (from internet conferences and access online knowledge), linguistic hospitality (language employed and translation).¹²⁶

Ciborra explains that hospitality is the human process of making the *Other* a human like

¹²³ <http://teacher.scholastic.com/lessonrepro/reproducibles/profbooks/shakespeare.pdf> Accessed May 2, 2019.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/metaphor> Accessed May 1, 2019.

¹²⁶ C. Ciborra, ‘Encountering Information Systems as a Phenomenon,’ In C. Avgeron, C. Ciborra and F. Land. eds., *The Social Study of Information and Communication Technology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 17-37.

oneself.¹²⁷ Hosting the new technology, for instance, could mean accepting a paramount symmetry between humans and non-humans. The internet, for instance, has become our global interconnectedness. The emergence of online communities with their congregational websites can form relationships, especially for people not drawn or linked to a physical space. Although relationships through online connections evoke something disembodied or impersonal, but this may probably be a good start that a certain amount of hospitality takes place. People these days navigate their way via worldwide web or google Christian websites. In addition, online socializations continue to flourish and grow.

The vast array of electronic tools online can challenge traditional expressions of hospitality that for some can become more effective, valued, and appreciated. Some religious communities have online discussions about vocation promotion, apostolate/charism, places of their mission, eligibility requirements, etc. This is now what the community needs to evaluate as the ongoing approach by many in the church for people who are in search for meaning or an answer to their inquiries.

The congregational practice of hospitality weaves together the different insights and backgrounds of people who are grounded in greater diversity of ethnicity and religion. It allows us to discover how the changing demographics in the Order can enable us to enter another's world and cross into the unfamiliar, i.e., seeing another face of Christ in the other.

VII. Conclusion

The variety of perspectives in hospitality has evolved through the centuries. Its interdisciplinary conversation and collaboration within and beyond cultural and social dynamics in the academe have generated transformation across the range of studies and critical insights. Several studies have engaged the metaphors of hospitality to focus on how we may live with difference and understand the host-guest paradigm that underscores the corporate vision that makes every effort that all should be welcomed as Christ. How the religious teachings support the hermeneutics of hospitality, however, as a human process of making the *Other* a sacred obligation, our understanding of hospitality utilizes a variety of resources

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

that embodies the myriad connections, including theology, Christian tradition, technology, and others with a sense of availability and responsibility.

As prescribed in Benedict's Rule, welcoming the stranger has drawn on shaping the sacramental presence of Christ hidden in others or in the strangers at the door, for he is "the Christ for us today."¹²⁸ God's presence reflects in the humanity of the other and responds with what is sacred in our humanness. This recaptures the divine in the other and allows the divine in us to be experienced as well.

Religious communities, like the Scalabrinian Missionaries, have created their cultural worldviews that focus on the embodiments of hospitality with immigrants, in particular. Their communal affinity with other non-profit organizations exemplify their commitment to the inclusion of voices that empowers these people towards the practice of hospitality. Their availability in today's technological society reflects *humaneness* in terms of their interpersonal encounters and work of hospitality in different ways. .

Moreover, having understood the Christian practice of hospitality, the religious community has to continue to shape their theological understandings and ethical practices that speak to everyday lives. As an open space for the *Other*, hospitality is re-appropriated within a pluralistic or multiple context, not only in the home, but also in other settings or paradigms, namely, empowering the demographics, encouraging new voices or ideas, continued identity formation, shared experiences, communal worship through the Eucharist, or computer network connections. It goes without saying that within the frame of reference from the self to the other to relationship, lies the reflection on Christian practice that ultimately describes the experience of having, giving, and receiving in a respectful balance. God's presence in the face of our many individual and communal issues reflect a radical doctrine of the *imago dei* believing that God created us all in His own image.

¹²⁸ Joan Chittister, *The Rule of Benedict: Insights for the Ages* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 140-141.

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