



Suggested prayer intentions:

Please pray for these initiatives, activities and concerns of the National Service Committee:

- ◆ That those involved in Catholic Charismatic Renewal throughout the US will be generous in offering aid to the survivors of Hurricane Katrina.
- ◆ For the National Leaders' Conference in Chicago in November.
- ◆ For the ministry of Pope Benedict XVI.
- ◆ For the Lord's guidance in the confirmation process of new Supreme Court justices.
- ◆ That the gifts of the Spirit will be richly manifested in our prayer groups.

Hospitality



by Angelina Sarmiento

When preparing hospitality for any event in our ministry, I am always reminded of scriptures in the Old Testament and the New Testament.

In Genesis, Abraham entertained the Lord and two angels, not recognizing who they were for a while (Chapter 18:1-8). He offered them his hospitality with everything he had. Consistent with the custom of the time in typical Bedouin hospitality, nothing was too good for his guests. As a gracious host, he also stood while his guests ate. Because of his graciousness and generosity, the Lord's covenant to be "...a father of many nations" was reaffirmed (Genesis 17:4). After the meal, the Lord told Abraham, "I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah will have a son" (Genesis 18:10).

In our reality, our willingness to give all the kindness that we are able to give to each other and especially to those who come to us as strangers, is one measure by which we are able to live the gospel of love that we all preach. As we love and humble ourselves in serving one another, we allow God's grace and healing presence to overshadow and fill our gatherings.

In my experience, I have come to conclude that it is not only God's Word that we share and 'break open' at our meetings and conferences that open hearts to conversion. It is also the fellowship that is shared at these gatherings that helps one internalize the grace of Pentecost. It is the extended hand, the warm embrace, the food that is shared, and the cup of drink that we offer to one another that bring to life God's great desire to heal us and his call to follow him (Matthew 9:10).

Recently, I read that there is a statistic that says that two out of every three people who attend church services on a regular basis in this country are hurting in some way. According to the article, this means that if you are not hurting today, chances are that the two people on either side of you are burdened in some way. Furthermore, the article contends that one of the reasons people attend church services is to bring their cares and burdens before God in the hope that he can transform them. With this in mind, we must allow God to use our charismatic events as an opportunity to comfort and strengthen his people.

In the Acts of the Apostles, St. Luke tells us that the early church communities "devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers... They ate their meals with exaltation and sincerity of heart, praising God and enjoying favor with all the people. And every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved" (Acts 2:42, 46-47).

In our prayer groups in the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston, we relive the experience of the early church communities through the very same things that St. Luke has mentioned in scripture. For the last nineteen years, we have grown in our spirituality and in our number. But more importantly, through the years we have experienced a closeness and bond with each other that has been fostered and nurtured by our fellowship on a regular basis.

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Although we encourage hospitality after each prayer meeting, our own prayer group has fellowship only once a month. Since we pray on Tuesday night, our situation is not conducive to having fellowship every week. However, on the last Tuesday of the month we celebrate Mass honoring the month's birthday celebrants and also acknowledge couples who are celebrating their wedding anniversaries. By doing this, we not only share a meal but also share in the celebration of life and love in our community.

In order to enhance the quality of our fellowship, we also have "Fellowship Nights" on some weekends. During this time, we gather at one of our homes and just spend time getting to know each other more and doing things we are not able to accomplish at the weekly prayer meetings. On these nights the activities range from playing table games, watching a movie, or keeping in touch by shar-

ing and conversing with each other. Because of these gatherings, we are more comfortable with each other and our different roles in ministry. Through the fellowship, our familiarity and closeness with each other has made it easier for us to identify those among us who are growing in their gifts and in their graces. This helps in discerning potential leaders of our community.

The word hospitality literally means to love to do or to do with great pleasure. May our efforts towards hospitality bear more fruits of love, perseverance and joy not only in our ministry to those who are being added to our numbers but also to those who are laboring with us in the Lord's vineyard.

Like Abraham, may we be willing to humbly stand by the people of God as they seek and partake of his mercy. Like Abraham's experience, through our

hospitality with one another may the Lord also reaffirm his covenant to make us his disciples, his witnesses and his very presence in our world that is in need of renewal.

"Be hospitable to one another without complaining. As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied graces... whoever serves, let it be with the strength that God supplies, so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong glory and dominion forever and ever" (1 Peter 2:9-11). ♦

Angelina Sarmiento has served in the Charismatic Renewal since 1983. From the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston she has served in leadership and teaching positions both locally and nationally.



Hospitality is...

Her name was Martha Montoya. A beautiful lady well into her 80s she was hospitality personified. She would come with her Deacon son to celebrate a Communion Service with us. When she entered the room everyone knew she was there. She didn't just sit down and make herself comfortable. She went around to everyone present greeting them in love, welcoming them as into her own home. Martha made everyone feel at home and was *sincerely interested* in you. She made you feel as if you were the most important person in the world. I would watch her in awe, noting the way people opened up to her and embraced her. What a salesperson she was for Jesus Christ and his great love for us! The Lord has called her home now and I am sure St. Peter is sitting back grinning as he watches her welcoming others to their heavenly **HOME**.

(Sr. Martha Jean, Albuquerque, NM)

Hospitality is not merely making a guest feel accepted, but also the ability to have one's guest enjoy their visit in your home. There is a difference between putting out fantastic food and making a person feel they are a part of your family. When getting together, our prayer group starts with a blessed pot. Sharing a meal was often a part of Jesus' community and there is a reason. Food brings comfort and relaxes us. It is through the sharing and listening about our interests, families, and lives that binds us together. A loving and caring group works together better than distant individuals. By the time we gather to pray and worship, our Lord has nourished our bodies and we are ready to receive his spiritual manna. Meeting monthly at a different member's home, reminds us of Martha's gift for providing for guests and Mary's decision to be with Jesus. At dinner and worship, *Jesus both feeds us and blesses us with his presence.*

(Tom & Carol Kolodzinski, Burnsville, MN)