The Fifth Sunday of Easter
MOTHER'S DAY
Rolling Meadows -- 1977

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IN NOMINE JESU

HEBREWS 13: 1,2 LET BROTHERLY LOVE CONTINUE. DO NOT NEGLECT TO SHOW HOSPITALITY TO STRANGERS, FOR THEREBY SOME HAVE ENTERTAINED ANGELS UNAWARES.

This is going to be an UNUSUAL MOTHER'S DAY SERMON. In fact, it will not be so much about MOTHERS at all -- except as they are the CENTRAL PIVOTAL POINT of every Christian HOME and FAMILY and, above all, of every Christian CONGREGATION or COMMUNITY OF FAMILIES. In particular I want to talk about CHRISTIAN HOSPITALITY.

HOSPITALITY says a lot about the way we TREAT and INTERACT with one another -- husband and wives, mothers and fathers, parents and children -- but MOST OF ALL how we TREAT and INTERACT with the OUTSIDER who comes into our midst. There is in the OLD ANGLICAN SERVICE BOOK AND HYMNAL a MARRIAGE PRAYER for the HOSPITALITY OF THE HOME: "O GOD WHO ART OUR DWELLING PLACE IN ALL GENERATIONS, LOOK WITH FAVOR UPON THE HOMES OF OUR LAND; ENFOLD HUSBANDS AND WIVES, PARENTS AND CHILDREN IN THE BONDS OF THY PURE LOVE. AND SO BLESS OUR HOMES THAT THEY MAY BE A SHELTER FOR THE DEFENSELESS, A BULWARK FOR THE TEMPTED, A RESTING PLACE FOR THE WEARY, AND A FORETASTE OF OUR ETERNAL HOME IN THEE, THROUGH JESUS CHRIST, OUR LORD." ..... That's a FINE PRAYER. I do indeed long for a place that can be "A SHELTER FOR THE DEFENSELESS, A BULWARK FOR THE TEMPTED, A RESTING PLACE FOR THE WEARY, AND A FORETASTE OF OUR ETERNAL HOME" in God.

And that kind of HOSPITALITY is also an IMPORTANT VIRTUE in the times in which we live. I have KNOWN and EXPERIENCED that in many of your homes -- the kind of GRACIOUS RECEPTION that makes your home MUCH of what this PRAYER speaks about..... And it is

even MORE VASTLY IMPORTANT when we gather together for WORSHIP. I want to pray this prayer for our whole congregation: "O God who art our dwelling place in all generatior Look with favor upon our assembly, our congregation; let it be so enfolded in Your love that it may be a PLACE OF RECEPTION, HOSPITALITY."

HOSPITALITY is a THEME in the Scriptures. "DO NOT NEGLECT TO SHOW HOSPITALITY," says our text, "FOR THEREBY SOME HAVE ENTERTAINED ANGELS UNAWARES." Or St. Peter says: "ABOVE ALL HOLD UNFAILING YOUR LOVE FOR ONE ANOTHER, SINCE LOVE COVERS A MULTITUDE OF SINS. PRACTICE HOSPITALITY UNGRUDGINGLY TO ONE ANOTHER. AS EACH HAS RECEIVED A GIFT, EMPLOY IT FOR ONE ANOTHER, AS GOOD STEWARDS OF GOD'S VARIED GRACE." Or in I Cor. 11 ST. PAUL lashes out against the LACK OF HOSPITALITY in the ASSEMBLY -- the kind of HOSPITALITY that is only CLASS CONSCIOUS, with CLIQUES AND DIVISIONS -- and he says that is NOT ADEQUATE for the Christian Assembly: "WELCOME ONE ANOTHER! WELCOME ONE ANOTHER AS CHRIST HAS WELCOMED YOU." .... That sounds VERY GOOD in a LAND STARVED FOR WELCOME -- for GENUINE WELCOME which may be for us a "foretaste of our eternal home in God."

What is HOSPITALITY? HOSPITALITY is really MAKING SPACE FOR THE OTHER -- MAKING ROOM FOR THE OTHER TO BE THERE -- so that the OTHER may "come in and sit deep," as old hosts used to say. "Come in and sit deep" -- Be at ease" -- NO DEMANDS, NO AGENDA

from the HOST that the GUEST must meet. Rather, HOSPITALITY is a kind of RENUNCIATIC OF POWER on the part of the HOST -- BACKING OFF -- MAKING ROOM in the space that is so often FILLED UP WITH OURSELVES -- MAKING ROOM in THAT SPACE -- ARCHIE BUNKER finally letti someone else USE HIS FAVORITE CHAIR -- that is, WITHDRAWING SOMETHING OF OURSELVES so that there is ROOM FOR THE OTHER. ..... But at the same time HOSPITALITY is NOT about LEAVING THE HOUSE. A GOOD HOST is still there -- MAKES ROOM for the one who comes -- but is STILL THERE to be AVAILABLE to that person.

HOSPITALITY -- like LOVE -- begins at HOME! How HOSPITABLE are we to one another -- NOT JUST ON MOTHER'S DAY, but EVERY DAY? How CONSIDERATE and KIND are we -- REALLY? How much do we TAKE ONE ANOTHER FOR GRANTED? ..... And in Church -- Do you know the ONE THING that people REMEMBER MOST about a CONGREGATION? It is NOT THE SERMON! It's the HOSPITALITY -- the way in which they were GREETED BY THE USHERS -- the HANDSHAKE (not noisy or boistrous to disturb other's devoti OF PEACE and EXPRESSIONS OF LOVE by the rest of the congregation -- and ESPECIALLY the KINDNESS TOWARD CHILDREN. Most MOTHERS AND FATHERS come to Church with their children VERY MUCH EMBARRASSED -- as if to say: "I'll try to be as little trouble as possible." But we can change all that by MAKING THEM AND THEIR CHILDREN FEEL WELCOME. "LET THE LITTLE CHILDREN COME TO ME," said Jesus.

And then the MOST IMPORTANT thing about HOSPITALITY is the MEAL. I don't mean to get

you FATHERS and CHILDREN into trouble -- but it surely would be nice if TODAY or THIS WEEK you would take MOTHER out to dinner. where the whole family could be together. All GOOD HOSPITALITY has to do with MEALS! It doesn't have to be much -- sometimes only NIBBLETS -- but it must be something. I remember as a child -- whenever somebody came to our home, whether invited or uninvited -- my father used to say, "Lottie, put on the coffee." And MOM usually had something to go along with it -- something GOOD AND SWEET that she had managed to HIDE from us -- or at least CHEESE AND CRACKERS -- BUT SOMETHING TO EAT

MEALS are important! That is why the EUCHARIST is the CENTER of our WORSHIP Sunday after Sunday. The DESCRIPTION OF MEALS is a way by which you can trace the WHOLE HISTORY OF SALVATION. Look, for example, at ABRAHAM AND MELCHIZEDEK -- that mysteriou figure -- Genesis 14 -- MELCHIZEDEK coming out with BREAD AND WINE in his hand -- BLESSING GOD and BLESSING ABRAHAM at the same time over the BREAD AND WINE..... Or Abraham giving HOSPITALITY to those THREE ANGELS who somehow become the VERY FIGURE OF GOD HIMSELF -- and the TABLES ARE TURNED and ABRAHAM IS NO LONGER THE HOST but the GUEST AT THE TABLE -- and the MEAL becomes a MEAL OF PROMISE, the PROMISE OF THE BIRTH OF ISAAC..... Or the PASSOVER MEAL -- everybody eating the PASSOVER LAMB standing up -- ready to MARCH..... Or the QUAIL and the MANNA and the WATER FROM THE ROCK in the wilderness...And then there is the MAGNIFICENT STORY IN EXODUS 24 -- where the ELDERS GO UP WITH MOSES BEFORE THE FACE OF GOD. And it says there that the "ELDERS

OF ISRAEL EAT AND DRINK BEFORE GOD'S FACE" -- and they DON'T DIE. "THEY BEHOLD GOD," it says. "THEY ATE AND DRANK." Far from dying -- which,was, of course, the prescription of the O.T. -- TO BEHOLD GOD WAS TO DIE -- they EAT AND THEY DRINK IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD HIMSELF.

Or think about the NEW TESTAMENT. Think about how Jesus -- a HOSPITABLE HOST SENT FROM GOD -- is depicted as a "GLUTTON AND DRUNKARD and A FRIEND OF TAX COLLECTORS AND SINNERS." Some have suggested that the very REASON for JESUS' CRUCIFIXION is the company He kept at MEALTIME..... Or think about the FEEDING OF THE 5000 and the 4000. ..... Think about the LORD'S SUPPER itself -- and, of course, the RESURRECTION MEALS. More the HALF of the stories of the RISEN LORD took place at MEALS.

I could go on, and on, and on, an on to recount the STORIES OF MEALS in the Scriptures. The point is that HOSPITALITY is SHARING YOUR FOOD and YOURSELF -- MAKING ROOM FOR OTHERS as CHRIST HAS MADE ROOM FOR YOU -- engaging with OTHERS over the GIFTS OF BREAD AND WINE -- OUR LORD'S VERY BODY AND BLOOD. Here it is that GOD WELCOMES US -- giving us a "foretaste" of the GREAT DAY when He will "WIPE AWAY ALL TEARS FROM ALL EYES, AND DEATH SHALL BE NO MORE" and He will "MAKE ALL THINGS NEW." What a HOSPITABLE GOD WE HAVE! Amen.