On Welcoming Asylum Seekers & Refugees

Reflections on Hospitality and Embrace
‘The act of recognition and welcome … leaps across the divide between communities and finds on the other side another community which offers the distinctive friendship of hospitality’.

(Oliver O’Donovan, The Desire of the Nations, p. 268)
The ‘will to give ourselves to others and “welcome” them, to readjust our identities to make space for them, is prior to any judgment about others, except that of identifying them in their humanity. The will to embrace precedes any “truth” about others …. This will … transcends the moral mapping of the social world into “good” and “evil”.

(Miroslav Volf, Exclusion and Embrace, p. 29)
‘The act of recognition and welcome ... leaps across the divide between communities and finds on the other side another community which offers the distinctive friendship of hospitality’.

(Oliver O’Donovan, The Desire of the Nations, p. 268)
‘Abraham and the Three Angels’, Rembrandt van Rijn (late 1630s – early 1640s)
'Rahab and the Emissaries of Joshua', Unknown (17th C)
‘Elijah and the Widow of Zarephath’, Luca Giordano (early 18th C)
‘Christ on the Road to Emmaus’, Roelant Roghman (1650–1660)
‘It is essential to our humanity that there should always be foreigners, human beings from another community who have an alternative way of organising the task and privilege of being human, so that our imaginations are refreshed and our sense of cultural possibilities renewed.’

(Oliver O’Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations*, p. 268)
‘The stranger is welcomed into … a place of respect and acceptance and friendship’.

The stranger is ‘included in a life-giving and life-sustaining network of relations’.

(Christine Pohl, Making Room, p. 13)
Hospitality means ‘inviting the stranger into our private space, whether that be the space of our own home or the space of our personal awareness and concern’.

(Parker Palmer, *The Company of Strangers*, p. 78)
‘Through our trying to show hospitality to the demon at our door, the demon may well be transformed by the grace that is shown.’

(Peter Rollins, *The Orthodox Heretic and Other Impossible Tales*, p. 29)
'We may come to realize that it [is] not really a demon at all, but just a broken, damaged person like ourselves'.

(Peter Rollins, *The Orthodox Heretic and Other Impossible Tales*, p. 29)
‘Where the dynamics of … dehumanization foster exclusion and expulsion, the practice of hospitality welcomes the outcast and stranger as a full member of the human community’.

(Richard Beck, *Unclean*, pp. 124)
‘Hospitality that welcomes “the least” and recognizes their equal value can be an act of resistance and defiance, a challenge to the values and expectations of the larger community’.

(Christine Pohl, Making Room, p. 62)
• hospitality as showing the other recognition (O’Donovan), as recognising the other as fully human

• hospitality as will to embrace, to identify with people in their humanity without any prior judgement or ‘truth’ about the other (Volf)

• hospitality as an opportunity to receive friendship (O’Donovan) and the possibility that strangers may enhance our well-being (Ross)

• biblical stories about the benefits of hospitality:
  • Abraham and the three men (Gen. 18)
  • Rahab and the Israelite spies (Josh. 2)
  • Elijah and the widow of Zarephath (1 Kgs 17)
  • the disciples on the road to Emmaus and Christ (Luke 24)

• strangers helping us to refresh our imaginations and our sense of cultural possibilities (O’Donovan), enlarging our space, helping us to see our lives through different eyes (Palmer)
• hospitality as welcoming the stranger in a place of respect, acceptance and friendship and in a life-giving network of relations (Pohl)

• hospitality as inviting the stranger into our private space, our personal awareness and concern (Palmer), as making room within the borders of our selfhood (Beck)

• Rollins’ tale about the demon being welcomed by the priest:
  • priest could not be robbed of his kindness, hospitality, love and compassion

• demon may be transformed by the grace shown

• we may come to realise that we are not dealing with a demon but a broken, damaged person like ourselves

• demonization of the ‘Other’

• hospitality as welcoming the outcast as a full member of the human community (Beck)

• hospitality as undermining existing power structures (Ross), as resistance and defiance that challenges values and expectations of larger community (Pohl)

• Jesus’ call to an ‘impossible hospitality’