

In the Indian language there is a proverb which roughly translates in English as “A guest is equivalent to God.” Hence a guest is treated like God or goddess. You may verify this with Bp McKnight and other mission team members who were in India this January. Everywhere they received welcome like God and Goddesses. This true not only of foreign guests but also local guests. They are treated like Gods and goddesses.

The main theme of this Sunday’s readings is hospitality and being able to recognize the presence of God in others. And taking up one’s cross and help such needy people. If only people of this great country follow this teaching of Jesus, there will be end of racism. Recently, even one Indian restaurant was attacked and vandalized with racist slogans written on the walls. This is all due to lack of failure in recognizing the presence of God in others.

In the first reading we see this rich woman recognized the presence of God in prophet Elisha. She showed him reverence and hospitality by inviting him to dine with her and her husband and by arranging an upper room of their house so that Elisha might stay with them when he visited the area. In response, Elisha promised her, “This time next year you will be fondling a baby son.” She was amply rewarded by getting a child for her work of charity

Today’s Gospel lesson concludes Jesus’ great “missionary discourse” in which he instructs the twelve apostles on the cost and the reward of the commitment required of a disciple. Jesus explains the difficulties of discipleship yet reveals that those who welcome the disciples have also welcomed him. Today’s Gospel also highlights for us the importance of hospitality in the Christian life. Jesus assures his disciples that whoever shows them hospitality will be blessed. Those who receive Jesus receive the One who sent him. Also, those who help the “little ones,” (believers) and the poor, the sick, and the needy will be amply rewarded.