

# *The Third Sunday of Advent*

December 14, 2025

## **Transformative Generosity**

Wendy Claire Barrie

*My soul magnifies the Lord,  
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,  
for he has looked with favor on the lowly state of his servant.  
Surely from now on all generations will call me blessed,  
for the Mighty One has done great things for me,  
and holy is his name;  
indeed, his mercy is for those who fear him  
from generation to generation.  
He has shown strength with his arm;  
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts;  
he has brought down the mighty from their thrones  
and exalted those of humble estate;  
he has filled the hungry with good things,  
and the rich he has sent away empty.  
He has helped his servant Israel,  
in remembrance of his mercy,  
as he spoke to our fathers,  
to Abraham and to his offspring forever.*

—Luke 1:46-55

**F**or as long as I can remember, I have loved Mary, the mother of Jesus. The Christmas Eve I was five, I came home from church, made my little brother put on his bathrobe, plopped a dish towel on top of his head, and brought him into the living room, where I draped a crocheted Afghan over my own head, swaddled my doll in a flannel blanket, and laid her on a sofa cushion between us. Before I understood Mary's song, I knew that hers was a story I would want to hear and tell again and again.

In time, I learned to sing and pray Mary's song, the Magnificat, it became foundational to my faith, and I no longer recognized Mary of the Christmas cards and carols, meek and mild. Instead, I saw a young woman of exuberance and courage. The Magnificat is at once deeply personal and





Monday, December 15, 2025

## Generosity and Hospitality

*To magnify is to enlarge, and that is what Mary's song challenges us to do—to enlarge our vision of who is blessed, of whom God acts in and through.*

—Wendy Claire Barrie

This week we will focus on the connection between generosity and hospitality. We will explore other biblical teachings on these topics, as both the early church and the church through the ages have worked to express generous hospitality.

In yesterday's inspiring reflection on the Magnificat, Mary's words found in Luke 1:46-55, Wendy Claire Barrie reminded us how Mary, from the very beginning, modeled an expansive hospitality. The quote above from Wendy's reflection is a call to us now to enlarge our vision of generosity and hospitality by examining and growing our vision of who is blessed.

This week we will see how the hospitality that God calls each of us to extend to others is grounded in the same hospitality that God offers to us. Hospitality is fundamentally about making space for others—creating room in our hearts, homes, and lives for people to experience welcome, acceptance, and care.

For people of faith, hospitality and generosity are not meant to be nice additions to a Christian life. Instead, they are meant to be at the center of living a faith that is grounded in the very life that Jesus modeled for us.

**Making it Personal:** What comes to mind for you when you think about connections between generosity and hospitality? How do you see Mary, the mother of Jesus, as a model for generous hospitality? Today, look for one opportunity to “enlarge your vision” by extending welcome or kindness to someone you might not usually notice or include.

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Tuesday, December 16, 2025

## Generous Hospitality Offered Without Expectations

*Hospitality is not to change people, but to offer them space where change can take place. It is not to bring men and women over to our side, but to offer freedom not disturbed by dividing lines.*

—Henri J.M. Nouwen

This quote from Henri Nouwen, a Dutch priest, professor, writer, and theologian, could be paraphrasing Jesus' words. Jesus did not extend hospitality to others in order to change them. He offered hospitality and love to all because that was his nature.

The love and hospitality that Jesus offered to people did, in fact, create space for them to change. He conversed with the Samaritan woman—something unheard of in his time—creating space for her whole life to change. He welcomed lepers and offered healing to change their lives, not just physically but spiritually.

Transactional hospitality is when we extend kindness and compassion to others and expect something back. This is not what Jesus calls us to practice. His call is to hospitality that is freely given to all with no expectations. This kind of hospitality can be transformational—for others and for ourselves.

When we offer hospitality without expectations, we create safe space for authentic encounter. People sense when our welcome comes with conditions or hidden agendas. True hospitality trusts that welcoming another person is valuable in itself. Offering unconditional hospitality is counter-cultural in a world that teaches us to calculate the cost and benefit of every interaction.

**Making it Personal:** What is the difference between hospitality that is transactional versus freely given and transformational? Today, offer hospitality (listening, presence, or help) to someone without expecting anything in return.



Wednesday, December 17, 2025

## Table Hospitality: Breaking Bread Together

*They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts.*

—Acts 2:46 (NKJV)

Some of the most powerful expressions of hospitality happen around tables. There is something sacred about sharing food with others—it creates intimacy, builds relationships, and communicates care beyond words.

Jesus understood this deeply. Many of his most significant teachings and encounters happened around tables. He ate with tax collectors and sinners, shared meals with his disciples, and used food imagery to describe God’s kingdom. The Last Supper established the pattern of communion that continues to nourish the church.

In our fast-paced world, table hospitality has become increasingly rare. We eat on the run, in our cars, or in front of screens. We’ve lost touch with gathering around a table to share food, stories, laughter, and companionship.

The early church understood that sharing meals together was about building community and expressing love. When they “broke bread in their homes,” they were creating space for relationship and mutual care.

Table hospitality doesn’t require elaborate meals or perfect presentations. The most meaningful experiences of hospitality happen over simple food shared with open hearts. The gift is the invitation and presence we offer one another. Sharing meals nourishes our bodies (strength), creates emotional connection (heart), builds community (soul), and requires intentional planning (mind).

**Making it Personal:** What are your most meaningful memories of sharing meals with others? What holiday meals have been especially meaningful and why? Share a meal with someone today—in person, over video call, or by delivering food—focusing on being present and creating connection.

## THE THIRD WEEK OF ADVENT

Thursday, December 18, 2025

### Welcoming the Stranger

*I was a stranger and you welcomed me.*

—Matthew 25:35

**S**t. Benedict, the Patron Saint of Europe who lived in the sixth century, was one of the first to prioritize monks living in community. Before Benedict, most monks lived solitary lives in the desert.

To provide guidance for monks living in community, he wrote the Rule of St. Benedict, guidelines still used by Benedictine monasteries. In Chapter 53 of the Rule, Benedict writes, “Let all guests who arrive be received as Christ.”

This instruction was more than guidance on practicing hospitality in a monastery. It was a reminder to see the divine presence in everyone, especially the vulnerable. Just as Christ welcomed all, including those marginalized in his time, we are called to do the same.

Benedictines, along with many other Christian groups, have founded hospitals and health care centers focused on providing care for those who couldn’t afford it. This tradition is a powerful witness of Christian hospitality, offering welcome and care for all. Knowing this history, it becomes clear how *hospital* and *hospitality* are related.

Welcoming the stranger requires us to move beyond our comfort zones and familiar circles. It asks us to see the divine image in people who look different, speak different languages, or hold different beliefs. This hospitality can be challenging, but is also deeply rewarding and transformative. It takes courage and resilience to reach beyond our comfort zones, and requires us to care for our own well-being so we have energy to extend to others.

**Making it Personal:** How might you offer hospitality to a “stranger” this week, welcoming this person as you would welcome Jesus? Today, intentionally engage with someone you don’t know well and practice seeing Christ in them.



Friday, December 19, 2025

## Hospitality as Spiritual Practice

*Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree.*

—Genesis 18:4

The story of Abraham and Sarah welcoming three strangers who turn out to be divine messengers is one of the most beautiful examples of hospitality in Scripture. What begins as a simple act of kindness—offering water, food, and rest to travelers—becomes a moment of profound spiritual significance.

This story reminds us that hospitality is not just a social nicety or kindness. It is a spiritual practice that opens us to encounter the divine. When we welcome others with open hearts, we create space for God to work through our interactions.

The Welcoming Prayer, a contemplative practice developed by Mary Mrozowski and others, offers a way to extend hospitality to people *and* to our experiences. In this practice (on p. 53), we learn to welcome whatever arises in our hearts and minds—difficult emotions, challenging circumstances, unexpected visitors—with the same openness we would offer a beloved guest.

This doesn't mean we like everything that happens or should be passive when facing problems. Instead, we approach life with a hospitable heart, trusting that God can work through all circumstances, even difficult ones.

When we practice hospitality as a spiritual discipline, we discover that it changes us as much as it blesses others. Our hearts become more open, our compassion deepens, and our capacity to see God in unexpected places increases. Hospitality as spiritual practice connects us to God's presence in others and helps us create space for rest and renewal.

**Making it Personal:** How do you understand hospitality as a spiritual practice? How might the Welcoming Prayer be helpful during the busy holiday season? Try practicing it today—when you encounter something difficult or unexpected, say “Welcome” and look for how God might be present in it.

Saturday, December 20, 2025

## A Banquet for All

*Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and  
bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.*

—Luke 14:21 (NIV)

**W**e began our focus on hospitality and generosity this week by reflecting on Mary, the mother of Jesus, and the beautiful words of the Magnificat from the Gospel of Luke.

Jesus' birth defied all norms—born not in a palace, but in a stable to a young peasant woman. This reversing of norms is repeated throughout Jesus' life, as in God's world, the first shall be last, and the last shall be first.

We see this in Jesus' Parable of the Great Banquet (Luke 14:15–24), where he paints a stunning image of God's hospitality. When the original invitees cannot attend the party, the host extends an invitation to the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame—those who in Jesus' time were rarely invited to dinner parties, but who would deeply appreciate the invitation.

The parable teaches us that God's hospitality, like the host's, is unexpected, freely offered, and extravagant. It is hospitality not based on status, achievement, or social standing. God's hospitality is transformational, not transactional. A Christian practice of hospitality calls us to extend beyond our comfort zones and embrace all with God's abundant love. God's vision of hospitality is radical—it intentionally includes those whom society marginalizes or overlooks.

**Making it Personal:** Who might be missing from our “guest lists” in our social circles, homes, and churches? What fears might keep us from expanding our comfort zones? How does this parable speak to you about hospitality?

**Weekly Integration:** Looking back over this week's focus on hospitality, which aspect challenged you most? Which daily practice felt most natural or meaningful? How might you continue to expand your vision of hospitality beyond Advent?