

Hospitality

Community, or how we live with others, is crucial for our world. To disappear as object of interest, like Thomas Merton, is to cease to be ego-driven, to refuse to compete or to make others our rivals. It is to see without illusion: "to see with others what we could not see before, to feel with others what we could not feel before, to hear with others what we could not hear before".

Hospitality is the creation of space where the stranger can enter and become a friend instead of an enemy.

Henri Nouwen

What is going on in your innermost being is worthy of your whole love.

Rainer Maria Rilke

Other people are not rivals from whom we must defend ourselves, but brothers and sisters to be supported. They are to be loved for their own sakes, and they enrich us by their very presence.

John Paul II

I believe that we are being summoned by God to see in the human other a trace of the divine other.

Jonathan Sacks

Esther de Waal says that "I cannot become a good host until I am at home in my own house." How at home are you in your own skin? How generous are you towards yourself? How accepting and gentle? This, after all, as Jesus saw so clearly, is the key to loving our neighbour.

The clue to how hospitable we are towards ourselves is to look at how sharp our reactions to others' faults or foibles are. We project on to others characteristics in ourselves that we don't like or are ashamed of. Praying for insight and courage to be yourself more clearly is one step forward. Another is to seek a trusted friend's honest word-of-truth about how you are seen.

By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. John 13:55

We love because he first loved us. 1 John 4:19

Philip Carter is a retired Anglican Priest. He was the inaugural president of the Australian Ecumenical Council for Spiritual Direction (AECSD). He ran the Julian Centre in Adelaide, an independent and ecumenical centre for spirituality, from 1997-2009.

Contact: juliancentre@gmail.com