

GOSPEL MESSAGE

June 28, 2026

LECTIONARY 13

From Welcome to Belonging

In just a few verses, the word welcomes sets the tone in this week's gospel passage. There are transactional aspects when we welcome guests into our personal spaces, or when we are welcomed by others. We are aware of the power dynamics between host and guest, and the welcome that is given and received reflects our understanding of these roles. There are also different degrees of welcome. For example, it is one thing to experience a welcome of our physical presence, and quite a different matter when our perspectives and opinions are welcomed. The former relies on host-guest roles; the latter relies on a relationship being formed beyond culturally established roles.

It is no surprise that congregations pay attention to their welcome practices. Some even adopt and publicize welcome statements. Congregations usually consider how visitors or guests come into their space for a worship service they host. When deeper welcome practices are employed, we can grow in our understanding of how we give and receive. This provides an interesting opportunity to consider that welcoming is more than just hospitality. We can also consider how the worship event happens because we are gathered by the Holy Spirit, so God is our host and we are all guests in that space.

Moving worship beyond a typical guest-host transaction, the reward is experiencing our belonging together as people of God. Belonging means welcoming one another into shared space. Seeking a wide expression of belonging challenges power dynamics that might otherwise remain in place in more traditional guest-and-host situations. Belonging is a culture we in congregations can cultivate and a gift we can share.

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