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Introduction

Sacred Hospitality Leadership: Values Centered Perspectives and Practices

THOMAS A. MAIER, PH.D., AND MARCO TAVANTI, PH.D.

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Hospitality is a gesture rooted in values and leadership. Being ‘hospitable’ toward ‘others’ is much more than a simple act of kindness and much more than a profit oriented service industry. It is rooted in our Christian faith and helps us as a society face the moral challenges for our global societies on the move. Its message is embedded through the biblical messages and is clearly exemplified by the Catholic Church and other religious traditions. Indeed, hospitality is a practice emanating from many religious traditions based on the practices and moral obligation of ‘welcoming the stranger.’

Unfortunately the depth of its significance for our human relations across diverse peoples, institutions, and borders is often limited by interpersonal and international relations skills. Social and faith-based values of hospitality are left outside the controversial and politicized topic between restrictive and inclusive views of migration. Yet, hospitality is intimately connected to the migratory nature of humankind and the progress of humanity. The future of our global societies with intensified and multilayered interactions requires a re-focusing on the rights and responsibilities connected to hospitality’s principled practices.

The purpose of this volume is to offer academic perspectives and practical reflections to rediscover hospitality as a ‘sacred’ experience. The articles and reflections of this collection remind us that hospitality-as-charity is not enough. It is an invitation to rediscover the sacred (enhanced) values of hospitality practices as expressed by many religious meanings, traditions, and daily work. The practices of hospitality, following the Christian tradition in general, and the Vincentian, Jesuit, and Benedictine traditions in particular, need to be centered in the values and practices of altruism, empowerment, justice, and dignity. In short, hospitality in Catholic religious traditions and other Abrahamic religions is one of the primary expressions of faith among the faithful and is to be extended toward non-faithful people.

In its own way, hospitality as expressed by Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, is a manifestation of God’s omni-benevolence, love, and mercy. The Catholic religious traditions of hospitality in the Benedictine Monastery, in Vincentian organized charities, and in the Jesuit services for social justice, are a further manifestation of God’s self-less love, unconditional care, and restorative justice. These manifestations of ‘religious’ hospitality are not separate from ‘secular’ hospitality practice. Instead, they aim to provide a higher benchmark in quality services, social justice, and respect for humankind and their rights. These ‘religious’ based expressions in hospitality service and hospitality justice provide some powerful and inspiring messages to revise our attitudes, priorities, and methods in hospitality.

Hospitality Leadership is about Morality

The first message these analyses of hospitality leadership offer has to do with morality and sacredness. Leadership ethics, and even more so moral leadership, are dimensions of the ‘sacred’ meaning of hospitality. The moral values of a leader need to be re-centered in her/



Engraved portrait of Vincent de Paul by Pierre Van Schuppen, 1663;

Engraved portrait of Louise de Marillac by Desrochers, undated.

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his identity as human being, religious person, citizen, and member of society. Although as a society we make distinctions between a person's socioeconomic status, political affiliation, and educational level, it is the moral element which brings (or should bring) us to the true self which makes us all 'children of God.' Morality should help us to distinguish between 'rights' and 'wrongs' and orient our decision-making toward benevolent behavior. Ethics goes a step further, helping us to make concrete decisions when faced with the complexity of society and intricacy of organizations. In the context of hospitality, ethical leadership is more than 'being good to others.' It is about providing the necessary support for people on the move, those arriving, departing, and transiting. In a sense we are all in transit during this life on earth, all migrating from one place to another. The expression of hospitality is therefore a 'sacrament,' a symbolic action in the natural world that expresses deeper spiritual meaning. In this sense, 'sacred' hospitality leadership does not mean to 'separate' and 'isolate' from the non-sacred (mundane). Instead, it is 'sacred' for its connection to the 'divine' — the 'spiritual' associated with life, creation, and love, the highest aspirations of human relations.

God is love (1 John 4:8), and the action of love for one another is the essence of the Christian message. Hence, the studies and reflections on hospitality leadership illustrated in these pages are essentially a message of love for one another just as Jesus Christ has loved us (John 13:34). They represent more than simply 'do no harm' and 'being compliant' (as in some narrow definitions of ethical behavior). They are about being good and doing good to others (in a true moral sense) beyond self-interests or aspiring to being followed. The moral aspect of hospitality leadership is therefore about serving others, developing the capacity of others, sharing your resources with others in recognition of their inner dignity as human beings and children of God. In other words, sacred hospitality is about the manifestation of the 'goodness' that God has manifested and continues to manifest, the generous bounty of creation, freedom, and love. Indeed, this level of understanding the moral obligations of hospitality leadership has important consequences at the organizational and societal levels.

Hospitality Leadership is about Quality Services

St. Vincent de Paul and St. Louise de Marillac became leaders in the sacred practice of hospitality. They were simply concerned about responding to the needs of the many urban migrants, orphans, widows, homeless, sick and poor people of Paris and the French countryside. Their faith-based aspiration to provide sustainable quality services emerged from their deep sense of faith in a God who wants us to live in dignity, health, company, and recognition. Their experiment of centralizing various services at Saint-Lazare in Paris was a large management commitment to provide quality health, social and other hospitality services to disenfranchised people and marginalized populations. Despite the many needs and their limited resources, Vincent and Louise did not settle for mediocre service. “It is not enough to do good, it must be done well” they probably repeated to each other.

Why such attention to quality services? Because they had an established benchmark, found in their faith of a ‘sacred heart’ that emanates from “Love for all and to the end.” Their charity works had to be of the highest quality possible and convey the best attitudes of respect and dedication representative of God’s manifestation of love because:

[The poor] are our brothers, whom God commands us to help, but let us do so through Him and in the way He intends... Let us no longer say: “I am the one who did this good work,” for anything good must be done in the name of O[ur] L[ord] Jesus Christ....¹

The model of Vincentian hospitality is based on ‘charity’ not as detached alms to the needy, but as an expression of God’s love that makes us equal as children of God. No matter our origins, social status, health conditions, etc., we are all ‘deserving’ of the best care. This ‘charity’ is actually a manifestation of selfless love and that is the true biblical meaning of ‘sacred’ hospitality. In commercial hospitality leadership we say “What can you do for me if I am nice to you?” Instead, ‘sacred’ hospitality leadership asks for “selfless and generous welcoming of people who cannot give back.”

It is a ‘transformational’ event because we are engaging in new relations and opening ourselves to deep change. It is not ‘transactional’ because biblical hospitality is based on the reverence that the action itself is a manifestation of God. The biblical message is, “I was a stranger and you welcomed me” (Matthew 25:35b), and “Do not neglect hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it” (Hebrews 13:2). In the faith-based and charity-as-God’s-love model of hospitality in the Vincentian tradition there is a deeper message. Welcoming the stranger is actually an action of community love (*agape*) as there are no strangers in the family of God’s children, only sisters and brothers we have not met before. The contemporary meaning of quality care

¹ Letter 2546, “To Firmin Get, Superior, In Marseilles,” 8 March 1658, in *Vincent de Paul: Correspondence, Conferences, Documents*, ed. and trans. by Jacqueline Kilar, D.C., Marie Poole, D.C., et al, 1-14 (New York: New City Press, 1985-2014), 7:115-116.

in hospitals run with the values and legacy of Saints Vincent de Paul, Louise de Marillac, or Elizabeth Ann Seton has translated these 'sacred' understandings of hospitality into practices of human dignity, respect toward the patient, and quality care.²

Hospitality Leadership is about Social Justice

As Pope Francis visited Centro Astalli, a refugee center in Rome, he said, "Hospitality in itself isn't enough. It's not enough to give a sandwich if it isn't accompanied by the possibility of learning to stand on one's own feet. Charity that does not change the situation of the poor isn't enough. True mercy, which God gives and teaches us, calls for justice, so that the poor can find a way out of poverty."³ Hospitality with justice is what best describes the works of the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), an organization founded in 1980 by Rev. Pedro Arrupe, S.J., the twenty-eighth Superior General of the Society of Jesus. To accompany, to serve, and to advocate are the specialties defining JRS's mission to defend the rights of refugees and other forcibly displaced persons in light of Jesus's compassion and love for the poor and excluded.⁴ A justice centered hospitality leadership requires moral decision-making and it implies quality service, but it is more than that. It looks at the systemic issues behind people on the move due to economic disparities, unequal opportunities, violence, hunger, diseases, discrimination, and chronic poverty.

In organizations, hospitality leaders concerned with structural issues may need to do a critical and objective examination of their roles and responsibility to alleviate the root causes of discrimination, injustice, and difficult relations. They also need to address the economic, political, social, and environmental factors that prevent people from properly developing in their careers, capacities, production, and services. In this case, the systemic level of hospitality leadership is much more than 'being nice to others' and 'actively listening' to her/his employees. It is about being actively engaged in the process of changing the structural issues that prevent workforce relations based upon fairness, respect, and collaboration. At the political level, hospitality leaders with systemic concerns would have to look at the policies and structures that allow 'toxic' behaviors and prevent people from being happy. For centuries the Jesuit religious tradition has been associated with social justice. Vincentian organizations as well have embraced the values of social

² See, for example, the religious origins and mission of Ascension Health, the United State's largest Catholic and nonprofit health system. "The Daughters of Charity National Health System (DCNHS) was established in St. Louis in 1986, but its roots extend back to 1633, when St. Vincent de Paul and St. Louise de Marillac founded the Daughters of Charity in France. When Pope Clement IX granted permission for the Daughters to live outside the cloister in 1668, the tone for their ministry was set: They would go where they were needed, putting their mission to work in the real world." Read more at: <http://www.ascensionhealth.org>

³ Pope Francis at *Centro Astalli* Refugee Centre, Rome, 12 September 2013. Access the full speech in Italian here: <http://www.news.va/it/news/discorso-del-santo-padre-francesco-al-centro-astal>; Read the report of the visit in English here: <http://vaticaninsider.lastampa.it/en/the-vatican/detail/articolo/27751/>

⁴ Read more about the works and mission of JRS at <http://en.jrs.net>. Read about their methods at: <https://www.jrs.net/assets/Publications/File/SideBySide.pdf>



Vincent, Louise, and the Sisters of Charity with the foundlings.

Artist and date unknown.

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justice and integrated it into their values leadership models and their poverty alleviation efforts rooted in systemic change.⁵

No matter what an individual, organization, or institution recognizes as their priority in this configuration of hospitality leadership, challenges remain to successful integration. Morality cannot compromise on quality and vice versa. In addition, ‘sacred’ and ‘good’ hospitality cannot avoid the question: “Is this just?” Justice is a prerequisite of charity. Hence, hospitality in the biblical and religious traditions of ‘charity’ is unconditional and self-less love based upon justice. Pope Benedict XVI explained the relation and integration of justice with love:

Charity goes beyond justice, because to love is to give, to offer what is ‘mine’ to the other... I cannot ‘give’ what is mine to the other, without first giving him what pertains to him in justice. If we love others with charity, then first of all we are just towards them. Not only is justice not extraneous to charity, not only is it not an alternative or parallel path to charity: justice is inseparable from charity, and intrinsic to it. Justice is the primary way of charity... ‘the minimum measure’ of it.⁶

In particular, this special issue of *Vincentian Heritage* is inspired by the aspiration of developing values-based leaders, quality organizational services, and improved care for

⁵ For an overview of the role of social justice with the values of service (servant leadership) and accompaniment, see the Vincent on Leadership—the Hay Project at <http://leadership.depaul.edu>. For a review of the Vincentian Family development works on poverty reduction through systemic change see: <http://vinformation.famvin.org/vincentian-information-resources/systemic-change-resources/>

⁶ Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, 6.

others. Specifically, the compilation of these articles provides a multilayered message of hospitality and illustrates both past and present benefits of values-centered Vincentian leadership practices throughout the world. You will find the compiled articles are both grounded in applied practice and theoretical consideration.

The first section of the issue is a compilation of scholarly articles surrounding the topic of hospitality. We begin with “The Grace and Call of the Hospitable God” by John Navone, S.J., and his discussion surrounding the grace and call of God finding expression in the many biblical hospitality narratives. He believes God as Host provides a garden for Adam and Eve, and walks with them in that garden. The primordial hospitality of paradise is a paradigm for human hospitality. Abraham and Sarah reflect God’s primordial hospitality in hosting their guests. “Vincentian Pilgrimage Hospitality: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives” by Edward R. Udovic, C.M., illuminates the history of pilgrimage and pilgrimage hospitality having deep living roots within Christianity and Catholicism. Within the Vincentian tradition there is also a long tradition of this hospitality found within pilgrimage visits to sites in Paris and throughout France linked especially with the relics of Vincent de Paul and the places intimately associated with his life and works. “Vincent de Paul and Hospitality” by John E. Rybolt, C.M., shares the many day-to-day practices and the leadership practicality and system processes of St. Vincent as he provided hospitality for the poor and homebound, often specifying hospitality service and quality standards. Marco Tavanti, Ph.D., artfully articulates the higher calling of hospitality to human kind and serving others in his article, “Hospitality Ethos with Justice and Dignity: Catholic, Vincentian, and Jesuit Perspectives on Global Migration.” Brother of Charity Dr. Rene Stockman shares the importance of values and the role hospitality can play in lovingly practicing hospitality in the spirit of Saint Vincent in, “Brothers of Charity: Hospitality as a Community of Brothers.” On the matter of immigration and law, Rev. Craig B. Mousin, J.D., authors a compelling argument as to the welcoming nature of hospitality and immigration with, “You Were Told to Love the Immigrant, But What if the Story Never Happened—Hospitality and United States Immigration Law.” In “Hospitality on a Vincentian Campus: Welcoming the Stranger Outside Our Tent,” Annelle Fitzpatrick, CSJ, Ph.D., articulates her belief that we might be losing sight of a unique opportunity to expand our sense of “hospitality” (enthusiastic welcoming of the stranger) to non-Christian students and parents that might be totally unfamiliar with our Catholic culture. Levi Nkwocha contends in “Eucharistic Hospitality: Two-Way Traffic” that Eucharistic hospitality is a coming (communion), and a going (sharing), so long as the going is intrinsically understood as a demand to share that which we have become (“Christs”).

The second part of this issue celebrates the many stories and applied hospitality practices of Vincentian family members throughout the world. These daily reflections were compiled from various international Vincentian stakeholders continuing the call to charity made centuries ago by Vincent de Paul. Evelyne Franc, D.C., former Superioress General of the Daughters of Charity, opens this section with “Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul: Reflection on Hospitality,” articulating what hospitality means to that

community. For her hospitality reflects a manner of being with those who are poor, as well as collaborating with those who share a similar desire to serve. J. Patrick Murphy, C.M., shares what it takes to be a successful leader in the likeness of St. Vincent himself in “Hospitality in the Manner of St. Vincent de Paul.” Both historical and contemporary leadership constructs are eloquently described in his reflection. “A Reflection on Hospitality from DePaul Ireland” by Christine Littlefield is a heart-warming piece on the core values which have formed the foundation of their hospitality praxis: 1) celebrating the potential of people; 2) putting words into action; 3) aiming to take a wider role in civil society; and 4) believing in rights and responsibilities. “Reflections from the Road: Vincentian Hospitality Principles in Healthcare Education for the Indigent” by John M. Conry, Pharm.D., sets forth the important role hospitality plays in healthcare-social justice. He feels it is important that those who work in healthcare understand and remain committed to Vincentian and hospitality-based health care, particularly for the indigent and marginalized. “Would You Like Fries With Your Borscht?” by Kelli McGee, Director of Operations, Depaul USA, illustrates the integrated nature of hospitality in building community and culture in the Ukraine. Joyana Dvorak’s “Cultivating Interior Hospitality: Passing the Vincentian Legacy through Immersion” is a poignant example of immersion experiences offering college students a taste and glimpse of how to live Vincentian hospitality in their daily lives. Lastly, “Reflections from the Field: Table Grace and a Biblical Call to Hospitality” by Timothy George, Beeson Divinity School, leaves us with the message that hospitality can be sentimentalized as the art of courtly manners or reduced to rules of how to hold a nice dinner party. However, although the art of being friendly, nice, and welcoming in social situations certainly has its place, hospitality in the Bible is much, much deeper than that.





Engraved portrait of Vincent de Paul by Pierre Van Schuppen, 1663;

Engraved portrait of Louise de Marillac by Desrochers, undated.

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