

# Hosted in you hospitality

Enzo Bianchi

The word "welcome" in a time when, in our country we often speak of "refusals" can not let the edge of the social dimension (and political) that binds to it. Share in the larger communities on this and compare the different positions in the light of the word of God, you will bring out contradictions and fears or to give birth to high aspirations and initiatives of welcome and openness. Today, practising hospitality in the manner used by the nomadic peoples of the Middle East, of which even the episode of Abraham in Mamre is testimony appears more and more difficult: an ancient custom, present in all cultures as a sacred duty, we are losing, especially in what we call civilisation "Western". The causes of this phenomenon are certainly manifold. First, the decline of the hospitality practice is caused by the consumerist nature of Western society. The market today has also gained possession of hospitality tearing the gratuity and making a business deal, a business. We must also take into account the changed type of the presence of foreigners in our societies. A presence no longer sporadic or seasonal, but consistent, stable, and - unlike the migration known since the nineteenth century - "plural": foreigners come among us from countries, cultures and religious worlds distant from us and each other. As a result, many of the "locals" feel threatened in their cultural and religious identity, as well as in terms of employment and safety, so that foreigners end up frighten. The fear of those who are different, and the repudiation of cultural forms, moral, religious and social distant from us eventually move us faster and faster towards the sphere of "private", isolation, closing another, perhaps masked by the housing own identity.

It should also be recognised that, little by little, this attitude of mistrust and defence tends to pollute all our relations, so that we end up not to practice hospitality towards those who can not even define, literally the "next", that is, who is "closer", those who live beside us sharing the same language and the same culture. So our homes increasingly resemble fortresses protected by locks, doors, gates, alarm systems, cameras, fences and walls we have become slaves of a mindset that gradually narrows and closes in what appears as "other", unknown, new, different. We end then to think about the hospitality only as directed to those we invite, but the invitee is not a guest, nor the attentions used towards him are hospitality ... The other, the real way, in fact, is not the one who we choose to invite into our home - perhaps with expectation of being then in turn invited (cf. Lk 14.12 to 14) - but one who emerges, not chosen, before us is the one who comes to us simply brought from happening of the events and the plot woven by our living, because "hospitality is a crossroads of paths." The other is the one who stands before us as a presence that asks to be welcomed in its irreducible diversity; no matter if it belongs to another ethnic group, to another faith, to another culture: it is a human being, and this should be enough so that we welcome him. In other words, why give hospitality? Because it is men, to become men, to humanise their humanity. Or you enter in the knowledge that each of us, as it came into the world, is himself a guest of the human, or the hospitality will risk to remain between the duties to fulfil: it will be maybe in the significant gestures ethical, but it will be located on a plane basically extrinsic and will not become an answer to the profound vocation of man, a realise their humanity by accepting the humanity.

The guests considered the human that is in us, not guests and hosts, can however help us take care of the human that is in us and in others, to get out of indifference and rejection of compassion, which alone can lead us to compromise us with the other in his need. The poor, the homeless, the vagabond, the stranger, the homeless, one whose humanity is humbled by the weight of deprivation, waste and abandonment of disinterest and foreignness, begins to be accepted when I begin to feel like my his humiliation and shame, when I realise that the mortification of his humanity is my own mortification. Then without unnecessary guilt and without hypocrites good feelings, you can start the hospitality relationship that leads me to do all that is in my ability for the other.

(Enzo Bianchi, Il Sole 24 Ore, del 23 maggio 2010)