

The Foundation of Hospice in Hospitality

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No Conflicts

Hospice Casa Speranței

La Mulți Ani!



“ . . . hospitality is universally understandable as a cross-culturally experienced human expression toward strangers in need. . . . it is a practice under siege because of Western individualism and the tendency to isolate ourselves from those we do not know . . . ”

Michael & Tracy Balboni, *Hostility to Hospitality*

St. Basil and the Origin of Hospice...

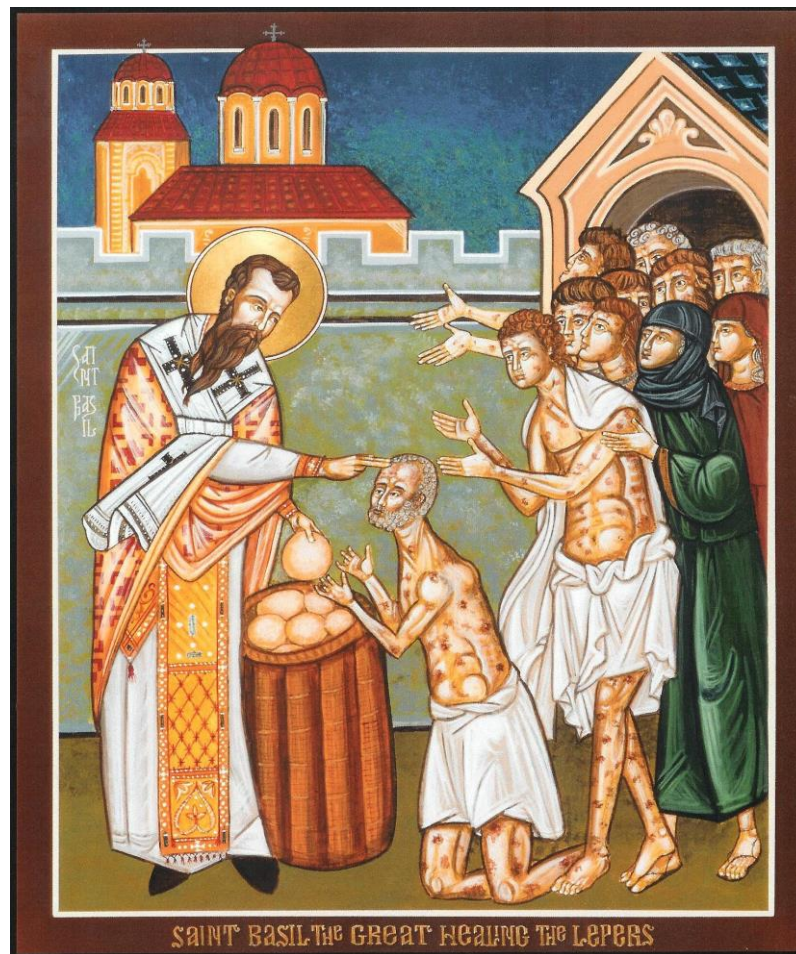
- Physicians in antiquity would not treat ‘hopeless,’ incurable cases for fear of diminishing one’s professional reputation.
- Concern for lepers in the 4th century ‘New City’ Archbishop Basil founded was a radical departure from prior precedent and his most amazing achievement according to Bishop Gregory of Nazianzus; greater in ultimate importance than any of the great monuments or prior achievements of their world.
- Archbishop Basil, who was also a physician, personally cared for lepers in his *keluphokomeion*.

Crislip, AT, *From Monastery to Hospital: Christian Monasticism & the Transformation of Health Care in Late Antiquity*, University of Michigan Press, 2005

...St. Basil and the Origin of Hospice

He did not therefore disdain to honor with his lips this disease [leprosy], noble and of noble ancestry and brilliant reputation though he was, but saluted them as brethren... **Basil's care was for...the imitation of Christ, by cleansing leprosy, not in word, but in deed."**

St. Gregory of Nazianzus (4th century) Or. 43.63



A Shared Etymology

- Classical Greek *xenos*—guest, host; stranger, refugee
- *Philoxenia*—literally love of the guest, stranger—*hospitality*
- Latin cognate is *hospes*—also dual meaning of guest/host—root for *hospitality, hospital, hospice*
- Laws of hospitality—“*the problem of how to deal with strangers*”
- Sin against hospitality (the bad Trojan guest stealing his host’s wife in the *Iliad*) and Odysseus’ search for hospitality (the *Odyssey*) drive Homer’s epics.
- Reciprocal nature of the host/guest relationship
- Guest as *stranger*—potential enemy (*hostis*), but also potential friend
- In hospice/palliative care the sick, suffering person becomes a *stranger* through the isolating effects of serious illness.

Hospitality and Palliative Care

- Continuum from *stranger* (possible enemy) to *guest* to *intimate* to fully integrated *member of a community*—building trust
- Vulnerability is a defining characteristic of the one seeking hospitality
- Same dynamic applies in the unequal relationship between physician and a suffering patient
- Concept of *boundaries* emerges from the ancient laws of hospitality—the host and the guest have specific roles in their reciprocal relationship

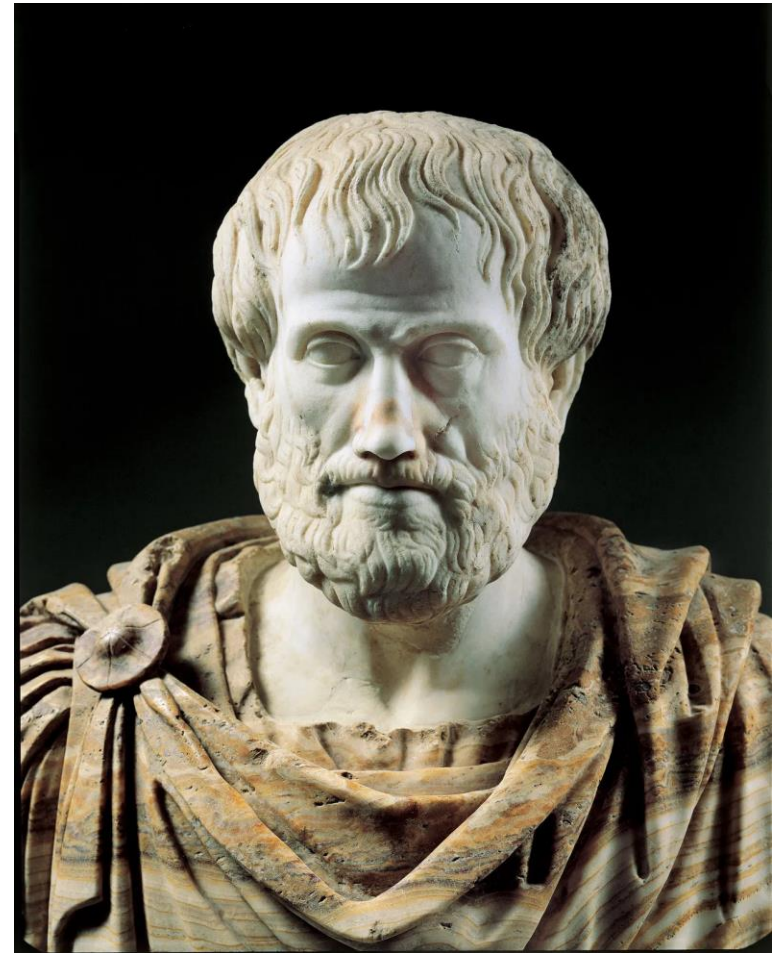
Friendship and Hospitality

“For the good man by the very act of becoming the friend of another becomes that other’s good.”

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 8, Chapter 5

“... friendship is an expression of community.”

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 8, Chapter 9



Breaches of Hospitality...

The Bad Host:

Xenodaites—one that devours guests—e.g., the Cyclops in Homer's *Odyssey*

Xenoktonos—slaying of guests and strangers

The *Odyssey* can be understood as “a study in the law of hospitality . . . the problem of how to deal with strangers.”

Pitt-Rivers, J. The Law of Hospitality. *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 2012;2(1): 501–17.

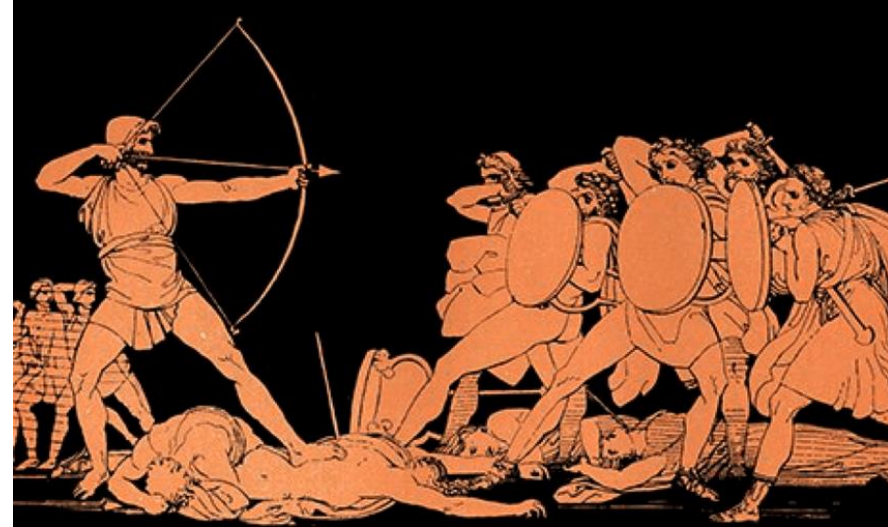


. . . Breaches of Hospitality

The Bad Guest(s)—overstaying one's welcome:

Odysseus and Penelope's Suitors from Homer's *Odyssey*

“I condemn any host who is either too kind or not kind enough. There should be moderation in all things . . . treat a man well while he's with you but let him go when he wishes.” *Menelaus to Telemachus, son of Odysseus*



The Pervasiveness of Hospitality

- Some form of hospitality is expressed in every culture and religion.
- The Laws of Nations are derived from the laws of hospitality.
- The footprint of hospitality can be found in nearly every human interaction.

Hospitality in World Religions...

- Animism—a means of controlling a potentially hostile spirit
- Hinduism—‘become a person who considers the mother as God, the father as God, the teacher as God and the guest as God’
- Buddhism—hospitality is tied to *giving* (not only alms, food, and shelter, but also one’s time in teaching the Buddha’s wisdom)

- Abrahamic Religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam
- Shared reverence in all three traditions for the hospitality of Abraham, e.g., Genesis 18:1–15
- Recognition that the stranger/guest might be angelic or divine is also present within Hinduism and the Greco-Roman pagan traditions.

Hospitality in the Torah

- “When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. The stranger who sojourns with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.” Leviticus 19:33–34

Hospitality in the New Testament

- “. . . I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a *stranger* and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.” Matthew 25:35–6

Hospitality in the Quran

- “Serve Allah and associate none with Him. Show kindness to your parents and your kindred, to the orphans and to the needy, to your near and distant *neighbours*, to your *fellow-travellers*, to the *wayfarers*, and to the slaves whom you own. Allah does not love arrogant and boastful men, who are themselves niggardly and enjoin others to be niggardly also . . .”

Prophet Mohammed. “Chapter: Women 4:36” in *The Koran*, p. 361; Translated by N.J. Dawood, Penguin Books, Middlesex, England 1968

The Hospitality Continuum

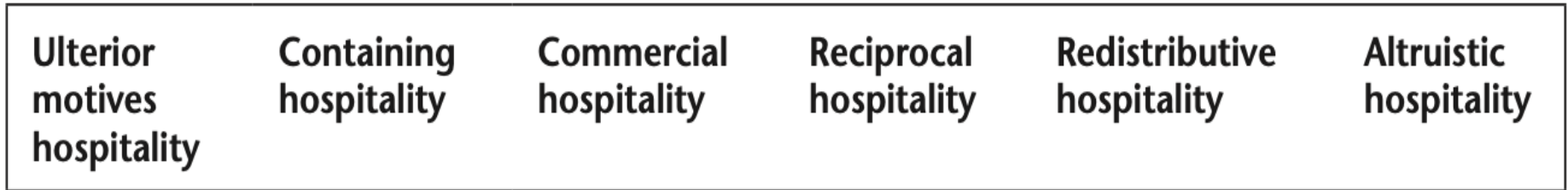


Figure 1.2 A continuum of hospitality

The hospitality industry struggles with the *transactional* character of commercial hospitality.

Is there a similar challenge for us working in health care to consider?

- To bring healing to an increasingly hostile world, we must rise above partisanship, practicing hospitality regardless of our patient's identity or our own.
- A hospitality grounded in compassion for the suffering and mortality that define the human condition which is at the heart of palliative care.
- We must be respectful *hosts* to our medical *guests* building trust within the therapeutic encounter.

Practicing Hospitality in the Operating Room

- Hospitality should be practiced *even* in the operating room.
- “. . . a common principle can bind bioethical (*values*) and biopolitical (*communication*) issues in the operating theater team. This principle is ‘hospitality,’ and can be equated with the ‘centeredness’ of ‘patient-centered’ practice.”
- “An act of hospitality for Aristotle in virtuous friendship is suspension of one’s own desire in the face of the Other. In the household of the operating theater, ethical practice is characterized by suspension of personal desire for the safety and care of the patient as special Other or Guest—an act of hospitality and a gesture of friendship.”

Bleakley, A. A Common Body of Care: The Ethics and Politics of Teamwork in the Operating Theater are Inseparable. *Journal of Medicine and Philosophy* 31 (2006) 305–22.

Hospitality and Cultural Health

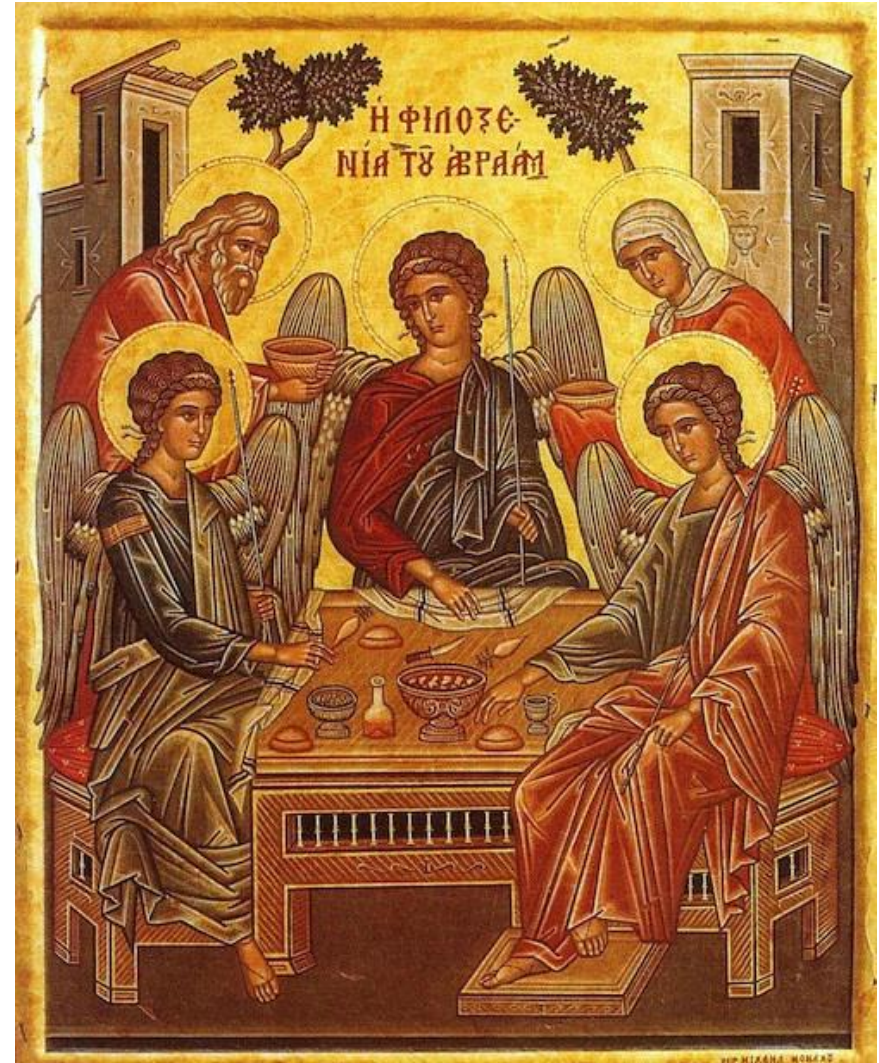
- We must serve as role models transcending and hopefully breaking down barriers in our increasingly polarized societies.
- Palliative Care has brought additional expertise in communication—*empathy, active listening and collective decision making*—to the therapeutic encounter.
- Can palliative care through hospitality bring healing to the broader culture?

Hospitality as a Healing Force

- We must help overcome what the late Eric Cassell called a *blindness to persons* that is so highly prevalent. Cassell, EJ *Ann Intern Med* 1999; 131: 531-534.
- Hospitality is personal and local, and so these efforts must be grounded *locally* within communities.
- Ideally, a culture of suspicion and hostility could be transformed *through hospitality* into a culture of mutual respect and goodwill.
- Suspending our mutual suspicions and sharing a meal (or the equivalent) together is a start—a powerful beginning to building trust.

The Hospitality of Abraham

The quintessential example of hospitality in the Old Testament is at the Oak of Mamre, where the patriarch Abraham is visited by three heavenly visitors who announce that his wife Sarah will bear a son in her old age. In the traditional Christian understanding, Abraham has extended hospitality to the Holy Trinity whose blessing on Abraham and his spiritual progeny is conferred through this encounter. Genesis 18:1-15



The Hospitality of the Holy Trinity...

Through the inspiration of the Russian iconographer Andrei Rublev the earlier representation gives way to an image of the Holy Trinity (ca. 1425), in the form of three angels sitting at table extending their blessing over the gifts being offered without the figures of Abraham and Sarah. In the original icon, it is clearly human hospitality offered to the heavenly visitors by Abraham and Sarah that is depicted, but in Rublev's inspired work the iconography has beautifully evolved to demonstrate its reciprocal, *the hospitality of God*, the Holy Trinity to the creation—a proleptic eucharistic vision within the Old Testament narrative.



...The Hospitality of the Holy Trinity

Every spontaneous act of generosity, every kindness shown to the vulnerable, to the stranger, from time immemorial is a type of the Eucharist.

It is the most powerful proof of the presence and action of the Holy Spirit in the cosmos—*who is everywhere filling all things* with His healing presence.

