

Hospitality Ethics on International Refugee Issue



Brazilian theologian Leonard Boff writes: As always, the global refugee problem presents an ethical imperative of hospitality at both the national and international levels. We are witnessing human migration such as occurred during the decay of the Roman Empire. Millions of people seek new homelands to survive, or simply to escape the wars and to find a modicum of peace. Hospitality is the right of all and the duty of all. Immanuel Kant, (1724-1804), saw clearly that the interdependence between rights and duties and hospitality, were necessary in order to construct what he called "perpetual peace. Anticipating its time, Kant proposed a world republic, or a Country of the Peoples, founded on the rights of world citizenry. This, says Kant, is the first task of "general hospitality".

Why hospitality? «because all human beings are on planet Earth without exception, have the right to be here and to visit places and the peoples that inhabit the earth. The Earth belongs to all, in community».

Kant proposes dismantling all the machinery of war and abolishing all the armies. Because as long as such means of violence exist, there will be threats by the strong against the weak, and tensions between Countries, undermining the bases for a lasting peace.

The spread of generalized hospitality should create a culture of rights that penetrates the minds and hearts of all global citizens, creating a "community of the peoples". This community of the peoples can grow to the extent that there is an awareness that a violation of law in one place will be felt everywhere,

something that Che Guevara would later repeat of his own accord. The spirit of hospitality and solidarity, is such that the suffering of one is the suffering of all, and the advances of one are the advances of all. It is echoed by Pope Francis, who speaks of humans as beings of relationships, who participate in the suffering of others.

If we want a lasting peace, and not just a truce or a momentary pacification, we must live in universal hospitality and with respect for universal rights.

Peace, according to Kant, results from the prevalence of the law, from legally ordained cooperation, and from institutionalizing cooperation among Countries and peoples. He says rights are "the apple of God's eye" or "God's most sacred gift to Earth". Respect for rights allows for a community of peace that puts a definitive end to "the infamous war making".

Good will is the last life boat that is left. The world situation is a disaster. We are living in a permanent state of siege or global civil war. No one, not even the two Holy Men, Pope Francis and the Dali Lama; not the intellectual or moral elites, nor techno-science, offers any clues for a global path. In fact, we depend solely on our good will. It is worth remembering what Dostoyevski wrote in his 1877 short story, The Dream of a Ridiculous Man, (El sueño de un hombre ridículo): «If everyone really wanted it, everything on Earth would change in an instant».

Since good will is so decisive, it is urgent that it be summonsed in everyone. Everyone bears the responsibility of hospitality, and everyone has the right to be hosted, because we live in the one and only Common Home.

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