



Giving and Receiving

In his excellent book *Being Christian*, former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams draws this lesson from the story of Zacchaeus:

Jesus is not only someone who exercises hospitality; he draws out hospitality from others. By his welcome, he makes other people capable of welcoming. And that wonderful alternation in the Gospels between Jesus giving hospitality and receiving hospitality shows us something absolutely essential . . .

Now, I'm probably alone in this, but Archbishop Rowan's comment made me think about the Royal Canadian Navy Manual of Naval Etiquette. The Manual outlines a first and second aim of proper etiquette:

The first aim of proper etiquette is "the consistent demonstration of thoughtfulness and consideration for the wellbeing of others." . . .

The second aim of proper etiquette is "the gracious acceptance of reciprocation." . . . [O]nly a mutual, interactive process of kindness and decency will allow mutual trust, respect and friendship to flourish.

Not only does God give us his extraordinary gift of grace, but he graciously accepts our reciprocation.

This reciprocation, however, is not a quid pro quo. The relative value of God's gifts to us and our gifts to God are nowhere near equal. The graciousness of a person of wealth and privilege will look very different from the graciousness of a person who is poor or otherwise marginalized. Yet though the fare at the poor person's table may not be the haute cuisine we would expect from the tables of the wealthy, who would be so churlish as to complain? The simple stew was likely a greater sacrifice for the poor host than the steak and lobster was for the wealthy. And like the widow's mite, it is appreciated all the more.

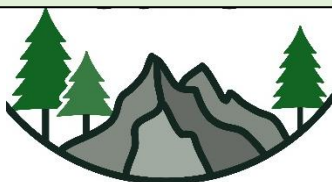
Our God is not content to be merely the dispenser of largesse. Our God seeks a relationship with us. In order for that relationship - that friendship - to flourish, the God who is so generous with us graciously accepts our reciprocation.

Fr Malcolm French, SCP, is the Rector of St. Simon's Anglican Church, Oakville, ON in the Diocese of Niagara. He has previously served parishes in western Canada and in Aotearoa New Zealand. He was also a Royal Canadian Navy (Reserve) officer for 25 years.

Questions For Reflection:

Can you think of a time someone was very generous with you but would not permit you to reciprocate in any way? How did you feel?

How was it different in another case where you were allowed to reciprocate?



Visit <http://www.christchurchwinchester.org/stewardship> for information on the Stewardship Campaign for 2026.



THE EPISCOPAL NETWORK FOR STEWARDSHIP