

Hospitality and healing go together, as does peace: ‘if a person of peace lives there’ there’s a spirit of hospitality and healing and of peace already at work. The rule of St Benedict lays hospitality down as a duty, as it is so famously in the Near East - a social norm to be expected wherever one goes – in marked contrast to the fortress mentality we have here in the West, and increasingly so. It’s an attitude of trust in the underlying nature of our shared humanity, an appreciation of our dignity as human beings, and an awareness that a spirit is at work that is greater than our fears. So, the disciples are sent out to discover where Jesus himself will be made welcome, where the sign of peace, the kiss of peace, will be sincere, where the spirit is already at work. They go in pairs because ‘where two or three are gathered in Jesus’s name He is with them’, the spirit is already at work. There is something very subtle going on here which only our well-tuned spiritual antennae will pick up. People pick it up here in Turvey. So many will say they can feel the peace as soon as they enter. Living in it of course, all the time, may blunt our appreciation and the minor irritations of difference become major, clouding our vision: we may even use visitors as a diversion from the essential work of divinising peace. ‘Divinising’ – now that is an interesting word– assessing the divine nature at work. St Luke then trusting his words to the page as healer and peacemaker, showing us a way of discovering Christ at work in everyone. The task of the disciples then not so much one of imposing Christ on others as naming Him – that shared peace that greets us in the stranger.

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