

POPE FRANCIS
GENERAL AUDIENCE
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[...] My dearest ones, hospitality is important. And it is also an *important ecumenical virtue*. First of all it means recognizing that other Christians are truly our brothers and sisters in Christ. We are brothers and sisters. Some might say: "But he is Protestant, he is Orthodox ...". Yes, but we are all brothers and sisters in Christ. It is not a one way act of generosity because when we welcome other Christians, we welcome them as a gift that is given to us. Like the Maltese — these Maltese were good — we are rewarded because we receive what the Holy Spirit has sown in these brothers and sisters and this also becomes a gift for us because the Holy Spirit too sows his graces everywhere. Welcoming Christians from another tradition means firstly showing God's love to them because they are children of God — our brothers and sisters — and moreover, it means welcoming what God has done in their lives. Ecumenical hospitality requires the willingness to listen to others, to pay attention to their personal stories of faith and to the respective history of their communities, communities of faith with another tradition that is different from ours. Ecumenical hospitality involves the desire to know the experience that other Christians have of God and waiting to receive the spiritual gifts that follow from that. And this is a grace. To discover this is a grace. I think of the past, of my land for example. When evangelical missionaries arrived, a small group of Catholics would burn their tents. Not this: it is not Christian. We are brothers and sisters, we are all brothers and sisters and we have to show hospitality to each other.

Today, the sea that shipwrecked Paul and his companions is once again a place of danger to the lives of other passengers. All over the world, men and women migrants face risky voyages to flee from violence, to flee from war, to flee from poverty. Just like Paul and his companions, they experience indifference, the hostility of the desert, rivers, seas... They are often not allowed to disembark at ports. But unfortunately, sometimes they are also met with far worse hostility from mankind. They are exploited by criminal traffickers: today! They are treated like numbers and like a threat by some government leaders: today! Sometimes the lack of hospitality drives them back like a wave, to the poverty or the very dangers they had fled.

As Christians we must work together to show migrants God's love revealed by Jesus Christ. We can and we must bear witness that there are not just hostility and indifference but that every person is precious to God and loved by him. The divisions that still exist among us prevent us from fully being a sign of God's

love. Working together to exercise ecumenical hospitality, in particular to those whose lives are most vulnerable, will make us all Christians— Protestants, Orthodox, Catholics, all Christians — better human beings, better disciples and a more united Christian people. It will bring us closer to unity which is God's will for all of us. [...]