

'You Took My Place'

A story is told about a man who visited a church. He parked his car and started toward the front entrance.

Another car pulled up nearby, and the irritated driver said to him, "I always park there. You took my place!"

The visitor went inside and found that Sunday school was about to begin. He found an adult class, went inside, and sat down. A class member approached him and said, "That's my seat! You took my place!"

The visitor was somewhat distressed by this rude welcome, but said nothing. After Sunday school, the visitor went into the sanctuary and sat down in an empty pew. Within moments, another member walked up to him and said, "That's where I always sit. You took my place!"

The visitor was troubled, but said nothing. Later, as the congregation was praying for Christ to be present with them, the visitor stood, and his appearance began to change. Scars became visible on his hands and on his sandaled feet.

Someone in the congregation noticed him and cried out, "What happened to you?"

The visitor replied, "I took your place."

Some things that happen in church are silly. Some things are downright scandalous. Some things may even be sacrilegious.

But the church is still the body of Christ, and it was for the church that Christ died.

Can such a treatment of visitors – as depicted in this story – actually happen in a church? You bet it can. I've witnessed it.

But before we get too critical of the church, let's consider how we may greet and treat guests who experience our centers in Life Care and Century Park ...

- On the telephone. Can a caller hear the smile in our voices?
- At the reception desk. Is there a sincere, warm, helpful attitude displayed?
- In one-on-one conversation. Do we make guests truly feel important and special, or are they "just another customer" to deal with?

(more)

True hospitality is the relationship between a guest and a host, according to *Wikipedia*, “wherein the host receives the guest with goodwill, including the reception and entertainment of guests, visitors or strangers.”

It becomes obvious when it is genuine and sincere.

And when it is not.

Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares (Hebrews 13:2 ESV).

– Beecher Hunter