



Last week, I read in the [Word Among Us](#), a new way of looking at the word, “**hospitality**” and I want to share that with you this week. Reminded me of something a father said in one of my **parenting** classes: “If you learned something new **yesterday**, I bet you would be teaching it today.!” I think that is so true. When I find something **meaningful**, I want to share it right away. So, this letter is on **hospitality** and **communication skills**.

What comes to mind when you think of “**hospitality**”? Fixing a nice dinner, hosting a party for someone or making your home ready for guests to stay overnight? These are all good examples, but the **essence** of hospitality is not about fancy preparations, it’s an **attitude of the heart**. It’s about making others feel **welcome**—even if they are not technically “**guests**”.

A **welcoming attitude** is communicated not so much by the words we use, but by our “**body language**”, our **nonverbal cues**, such as: **facial expressions, gestures, posture, and tone of voice**. All of these are **powerful** communication tools that speak **louder** than our words. It is good to be aware of our own body language as well as others when we are speaking with them, especially **patients** and those in nursing homes.

We cultivate an **attitude of hospitality** by being aware of our **body language** as well as our **words**. If we have a **welcoming attitude**, we will find **opportunities** to put it into practice. **All** that we do and say communicates to others that we are **happy** to see or be with them and, maybe, eager to know them better. I hope people at St. Mary’s could see in my face how **happy** I was to meet them when I was there before the pandemic.

Making people feel **welcomed** can happen **anywhere** or **anytime**. It can happen as you pass a neighbor in the grocery aisle. It can happen when you spot a friend or family that you haven’t seen for years at a gathering. It can happen as you chat on the phone with a relative or friend. What’s important is not what you do but the **way** you do it.

Wherever we go and whatever we do, we are surrounded by people who **want** and **need** to feel welcomed. Why not ask the **Holy Spirit** to point them out to us. We never know how far a simple act of kindness can go.

Whether we’re aware of it or not, all of our nonverbal behaviors send strong messages. They can put people at ease, build trust, or they can offend and undermine what we’re trying to convey. These messages **don’t stop** when we stop speaking either. Even when we’re **silent**, we’re still communicating nonverbally.

Sometimes what comes out of our **mouth** and what we communicate through our **body language** may be two totally different things. Then, our listeners need to choose whether to believe our **verbal** or **nonverbal** message. Since body language is a natural, unconscious language that broadcasts our **true feelings and intentions**, they’ll likely choose the nonverbal message.

If we want to become a **better communicator**, it’s important to become more sensitive to the body language and nonverbal cues of **others** as well as our own.