



## Hebrews 13:1-8, 15-16

### Reverend Giuseppe Mattei (August 31, 2025)

The author of the Letter to the Hebrews says, “Let mutual love continue,” but I wonder if he should have said “Let mutual love *begin!*” It’s not like we see it all that much!

Faith in God is lived practically: we *practice* our faith in the daily tasks of life. We respond to life happening to us with our mind’s eyes set on Jesus and our heart open to new opportunities to love God back.

Hebrews 13 mentions:

- Hospitality (v. 2)
- Visiting those in prison and are tortured (v. 3)
- Honoring holy unions (v. 4)
- Being content and trusting that God will provide (v. 5-6)

It’s like keeping in mind the Ten Commandments and Matthew 25:31-46 all the same time.

The goal of *Christian* brotherly love (***philadelphia***) isn’t merely restricting our attentions and love to people like us, but ***philoxenia***, love for strangers (which is the opposite of xenophobia.) Why love them and extend them hospitality? Hebrews, recalling Genesis 18 (Abraham and Sarah’s hospitality to the strangers by the Oaks of Mamre), reveals that God has this peculiar way of using the stranger to test us, to let God’s Self be made known to us, for new life to come through them. And when we have that, when we extend hospitality through true “brotherly love,” we don’t have a “we” and a “them” any longer: all we have is an “us.”

Remember those in prison as if you were in there with them (maybe at Alligator Alcatraz!)

Honor your spouse: Is there dominance? Judgment? Spite? Iceness?

Watch your anxiety and put greed out of your system: don't fall for how safe or powerful money makes you feel. Trust God who "will never leave you or forsake you."<sup>1</sup> So we can say with confidence,

"The Lord is my helper;

I will not be afraid.

What can anyone do to me?"<sup>2</sup> (Hebrews 13:6)

Doesn't it sound a lot like "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want." of Psalm 23?

And finally: "Remember your leaders, those who spoke the word of God to you." Whether you liked them or not is not important: they still announce the Word to you: that you need to obey for "Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever." Jesus does not fail us: when we live by his word, we make him present to ourselves and to others. All that does not align with his word needs to be forgiven and healed. Let us turn to him with all our hearts. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Hebrews 13:5 borrows from Deuteronomy 31:6

<sup>2</sup> Hebrews 13:6 borrows from Ps 118:6 and Ps 27:1-3