

Article

Jesuit and Feminist Hospitality: Pope Francis' Virtue Response to Inequality

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Abstract: Pope Francis is the first Jesuit pope and has made economic inequality a theme of his pontificate. This article shows that Pope Francis diagnoses economic inequality as both a structural problem and a problem of virtue, and that the virtue he calls for in response is what James F. Keenan, SJ has called Jesuit hospitality. Reviewing contemporary theological work on hospitality, I show that Francis' Jesuit hospitality shares many features with hospitality as described by feminist theologians. Namely, it is risky, takes place across difference, acknowledges the marginality of both host and guest, and promises mutual benefit to each party. Francis' account of the spiritual practice of encounter provides a concrete vision of Jesuit hospitality in action. This article contributes to existing literature on the uniquely Jesuit nature of Francis' theology and to work showing the resonance of his intellectual standpoint with feminist approaches. It proposes a Christian virtue response to the pressing contemporary problem of economic inequality.

Keywords: inequality; virtue; hospitality; Jesuit; Pope Francis; feminism

1. Introduction

In today's globalized, unequal world, 2.2 billion people live on less than \$2 U.S. per day while 62 individuals own as much wealth as the poorest half of the world [1]. This and other shocking statistics have made economic inequality an issue of urgent concern for scholars, policy makers and religious leaders. Pope Francis spoke out strongly on the issue in his 2013 apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, which links the harmful reality of extreme economic inequality with the church's evangelical mission [2]. Francis insists that economic inequality excludes many people from society as those with privilege withdraw from common life and turn inward. Scholars across disciplines confirm this insight [3–5].

In the first section of this essay, I review Francis' description of the problem of inequality in *Evangelii Gaudium*, showing how his diagnosis of inequality's damage affirms and goes beyond the insights of social scientists to show inequality as a virtue problem. In the essay's second section, I review recent scholarship on the virtue of hospitality, demonstrating how feminist scholars insist that hospitality is risky, mutual, marginal, and takes place across difference. In the third section, I argue that Francis' virtue perspective on inequality presumes the virtue James F. Keenan, SJ calls Jesuit hospitality as a solution, while Francis deepens our understanding of that virtue by proposing his own spiritual practice of encounter. I draw this work together to argue that the virtue of hospitality, understood in Jesuit and feminist keys, can help us respond to extreme economic inequality in our time. This research makes two contributions: it proposes a Christian virtue response to the pressing contemporary problem of economic inequality, and it details an aspect of Francis' theology, particularly as Jesuit, that is heretofore little appreciated.

2. Inequality as a Virtue Problem

Not many years ago, I would have felt it necessary to make the case that economic inequality should be discussed as a problem distinct from poverty; that it had related, but distinct causes, impacts, and solutions. Today, however, as attested by the work of many authors in this volume, it is widely understood that extreme economic inequality threatens the well-being of societies and the individuals within them, and that some of these harms would remain even if extreme poverty were sufficiently addressed. For example, inequality limits political voice [4]. It correlates with serious social problems including crime, incarceration, drug abuse, poor health, and early death, and affects all members of society, not just the poorest, on these measures [5]. Inequality harms social mobility [6], which has negative psychological and social impacts for unemployed people [3]. Evidence continues to mount that inequality is a problem distinct from poverty and should be treated as such.

Pope Francis certainly concurs with the insights of social scientists about inequality's harms, but he adds a nuance: he diagnoses inequality as a virtue problem. The virtue approach to understanding the moral life asks what qualities we need to develop to make us truly human, and how we can develop them in our own lives ([7], p. 23). Francis explores the impact of inequality on the virtues, or qualities, persons are able to develop throughout their lives, and finds that inequality causes exclusion, threatening our ability to become fully human, flourishing beings in community with one another. First I will show how Francis takes up the impact of inequality on societal structures and the common good, and then turn to his analysis of its effect on personal virtue.

For Francis, the worst effect of widespread inequality is exclusion. He writes this: "It is no longer simply about exploitation and oppression, but something new. Exclusion ultimately has to do with what it means to be a part of the society in which we live; those excluded are no longer society's underside or its fringes or its disenfranchised—they are no longer even a part of it" ([2], p. 53). Inclusion demands societies prioritize "education, access to health care, and above all employment [in] free, creative, participatory and mutually supportive labour" ([2], p. 192). This is a rich and detailed view of what inclusion looks like—it is not mere subsistence, nor mere access to consumer goods, but full participation in those goods that members of society create through their life together.

Francis ratifies the findings of public health scholars by noting that when people are excluded from society, the result is often violence.¹ He says: "When a society [...] is willing to leave a part of itself on the fringes, no political programmes or resources spent on law enforcement or surveillance systems can indefinitely guarantee tranquility" ([2], p. 59). When he says "When a society is *willing* to leave part of itself on the fringes," Francis clearly insists that people are not excluded by inequality because of their own individual failings. Rather, allowing some to be excluded from life by the economy is a choice, an act of will on the part of society, and a society can choose to shape things differently.²

Pope Francis is very clear on the fact that inequality is not natural or inevitable. Rather, it is created by human choices and can be changed. He says, "Some people continue to defend trickle-down theories which assume that economic growth, encouraged by a free market, will inevitably succeed in bringing about greater justice and inclusiveness in the world." And he calls this view an "opinion, which has never been confirmed by the facts" ([2], p. 54). He decries "ideologies which defend the absolute autonomy of the marketplace," ([2], p. 56) and says "No to a financial system which rules rather than serves" ([2], p. 57). Human dignity should be absolute, but the current financial system sees money and power as absolute and human dignity as relative (ibid.)

Thus far, the perspective of *Evangelii Gaudium* on the harmful aspects of inequality sounds similar to the critiques offered by thinkers in the secular realm. Inequality harms the common good when

¹ Social scientists concur that violence in society rises with inequality: see ([5], pp. 140–41).

² Pope Francis' writings are notable for his broad reliance on the statements of bishops from all around the world. *Evangelii Gaudium* includes quotes from bishops' groups on six continents, like this statement from the bishops of Brazil: "We know that there is enough food for everyone and that hunger is the result of a poor distribution of goods and income" ([2], p. 191). Hunger is not inevitable, and neither is inequality. Both are products of human choice.

it excludes people from the basic needs of life; when it keeps them from meaningful work and from participation in society; and when it leads to violence [3–5]. Inequality is a structural problem, it was created by human choice, and it can be changed. While it's certainly valuable that Pope Francis adds the impact of his global stature to these critiques, in fact his most unique contribution lies elsewhere. The unique word that Pope Francis has to say on inequality is that it's a virtue problem. Not only is it a symptom of certain moral failings in societies, it helps cause moral failings and make them worse, interfering with the development of virtues like solidarity, compassion, and justice.

Francis eloquently describes the way that global inequalities help keep people who are comfortable from experiencing solidarity with the suffering poor. He says:

To sustain a lifestyle which excludes others, or to sustain enthusiasm for that selfish ideal, a globalization of indifference has developed. Almost without being aware of it, we end up being incapable of feeling compassion at the outcry of the poor, weeping for other people's pain, and feeling a need to help them. [...] The culture of prosperity deadens us; we are thrilled if the market offers us something new to purchase. In the meantime all those lives stunted for lack of opportunity seem a mere spectacle; they fail to move us ([2], p. 54).

It's important to note here that Francis acknowledges the mutual relationship between the virtue of a person and the society a person lives in and helps to create. At one time we might have said that social sin is simply a manifestation of the sum of individual sins—for example, that because many people lack temperance, societies display consumerism.³ Francis is saying something more complex, describing a vicious circle. The globalization of indifference helps to shape indifferent persons, whose actions, or rather failure to act, expand the culture of indifference. The globalization of indifference impedes persons from developing and exercising the virtues of compassion, solidarity and justice.

The argument that unequal societies impede virtue is relatively new in theology. Although Pope Francis is its best-known exponent, the argument is not unique to him. I want to briefly call attention to a few other theologians who have made similar points. (Very much in line with theologians' concerns, philosopher Dustin Crummett, in this volume, shows how vast wealth can impede well-being from an objective list or hybrid, rather than a virtue, theory of well-being [11].)

An instantly memorable account of how inequality in society impedes virtue comes from the Nigerian theologian Olubiyi Adeniyi Adewale in his essay on the parable of Lazarus and the rich man (Luke 16:19–31). As Luke's Gospel tells us, Lazarus was a beggar who received no help from a rich man, until they both died and the rich man came to regret his hard-heartedness.

In Lazarus' time on earth, the only help he received was from "dogs [who] came and licked his sores." Adewale says that in African belief, the saliva of dogs can be helpful for healing, and Jews in Jesus' time believed this as well. So the dogs who licked Lazarus' sores were helping him—but the rich man, of course did not help him at all. Adewale argues that the rich man thus failed to be human. Blinded by his own love for money, he reveals himself as less human than the dogs [12].

Adewale compares Christians in wealthy societies to the rich man in the parable. Thanks to globalized media, he says, "like the biblical Lazarus, the poor in Africa have been laid at the gate of the rich brethren of the developed countries [...]. Unfortunately, to date, a large percentage of the believers in the developed countries seem to have decided not to "see" their covenant brethren in distress" ([12], p. 40). The wealth of Christians in developed countries interferes with their development of the virtues of compassion and justice.

U.S. theologians have also addressed the link between virtue or vice and inequality. In 2008, Bryan Massingale wrote that in the U.S., individualism, consumerism and racism create a unique type of "cultured indifference" to the poor [13]. This is similar to Pope Francis' suggestion that the

³ That no theologian would describe the relationship between social sin and personal virtue so simplistically today is thanks to the great work of many theologians who explain it more thoughtfully. See for example [8–10].

“globalization of indifference” shapes our response to those in poverty. David Cloutier’s work on luxury [14,15] and Julie Hanlon Rubio’s family ethics of consumption [16] also point in this direction. When Cloutier warns against luxury and Rubio promotes tithing, they are not just thinking of the funds that could be redirected to address poverty, although that is part of their concern. They also suggest that spending lavishly, even if one can afford it, may promote vice and that we can help ourselves develop virtues like compassion and solidarity by living more moderately.

Following Francis and other theologians, we could understand economic inequality, and our position within unequal societies by virtue of wealth or poverty, as a type of moral luck. In virtue ethics, moral luck indicates acknowledgement that due to life circumstances beyond our control, we are not all equally positioned to pursue virtue ([7], pp. 29–30; see also [17]). Rubio acknowledges this when she notes that a typical middle-class lifestyle leaves many Christian parents wanting something “more” and “deeper” for themselves and their children, and counsels virtuous practice as a solution ([16], pp. 191–92). Cloutier does the same when he shows how the positional nature of certain economic goods encourages the vice of luxury ([15], pp. 160–66), and Francis when he insists that inequality encourages moral deadness ([2], p. 54). That is all I will say about that now, simply to acknowledge that the notion that life circumstances shape our pursuit of virtue, sometimes for the worse, is a notion growing in acceptance in Christian virtue ethics.

While Francis recognizes the economic and social factors that create and sustain inequality, there is no clearer evidence of the fact that he recognizes inequality as a virtue problem than his proposed solution: the virtuous practice of encounter. His description of the practice of encounter helps us read Francis’ theology particularly as Jesuit.⁴

In *Evangelii Gaudium* and other writings, as well as by example through his actions, Francis calls Christians to be “the church which goes forth” ([2], p. 24). “Going forth,” “going out of ourselves,” is one of the most common phrases in *Evangelii Gaudium*. Francis’ description of encounter clearly evokes the virtue James F. Keenan, a Jesuit like Francis, has called “Jesuit hospitality” [19]. Before introducing the notion of Jesuit hospitality and showing how Francis’ theology of encounter relies on this virtue, I will review recent scholarship on hospitality to show how this virtue has evolved, in the understanding of contemporary feminist theologians, to a virtue that crosses boundaries of difference, accepts risk, embraces marginality of both host and guest, produces mutual benefit for both host and guest, and ably meets the demands of a world of deep inequality.

3. Hospitality in a Feminist Key

By far the most in-depth and interesting recent work on the virtue of hospitality comes from authors with implicit or explicit feminist commitments. No surprise there, as attention to embodiment, quotidian life, and activity traditionally gendered as feminine are among the feminist intellectual commitments that urge attention to this most vexed of virtues. Many begin by rejecting traditional mischaracterizations of the virtue. Feminist authors universally denounce visions of hospitality as “cozy” and “sentimental,” what Letty Russell associates with “tea and crumpets” ([20], p. 19) and “terminal niceness” ([20], p. 80). For Russell, hospitality is also practiced in a way that “deforms” it from its purpose when “it is practiced as a way of caring for so called ‘inferior people’ by those who are more advantaged and able to prove their superiority by being ‘generous,’” a model of hospitality Russell criticizes with the term ‘lady bountiful.’ ([20], pp. 80–81).⁵ Elizabeth Newman blasts “Disney World hospitality” which paints God’s realm as a magic kingdom of ease, free from challenge ([21], p. 24).

⁴ Pope Francis has often acknowledged the deep influence of Ignatian spirituality on his life and thought, and many commentators observe this in everything from the language he uses to instruct the Curia to his personal humility ([18], pp. 414–17).

⁵ Feminists have long remarked that certain qualities or behaviors are subject to criticism in women but not in men, leading to the existence of gendered insults that have no equivalent for men. “Lady bountiful” appears to be one of these.

In contrast to all these notions, scholars today insist, hospitality is a risky virtue.⁶ It involves risk to both guest and host, places host and guest in touch with their own status of marginality, and forces hosts to confront the limits of their own ability to pursue virtue and do the right thing. Since hospitality by definition is practiced across boundaries of difference, it forces host and guest to acknowledge and embrace their own differences rather than attempting to erase them. As we begin to see why hospitality is the virtue that economic inequality demands, let us examine feminist visions of hospitality in more detail.

3.1. Difference

Christian understandings of hospitality are informed by its practice in ancient Middle Eastern and Greco-Roman contexts, where hospitality was understood as an important condition of encounters across group boundaries. For Biblical scholar Laurie Brink, Jesus' encounters with the Syro-Phoenician woman (Mark 7:24–30) and the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4) reveal that “we are always the other encountering the other,” sometimes host and sometimes guest ([23], p. 19). In each of these exchanges, both Jesus and his interlocutor were transformed by their encounter. For Jessica Wroblewski, hospitality simultaneously requires and deconstructs boundaries between host and guest ([24], p. 75). Letty Russell similarly notes that difference is a precondition for hospitality: “Hospitality is the practice of God’s welcome by reaching across difference to participate in God’s actions bringing justice and healing to our world in crisis” ([20], p. 19).

These scholars insist that hospitality occurs in spaces where difference exists between host and guest. By offering and accepting hospitality, host and guest acknowledge their own differences and say Yes to encountering one another despite them.⁷ Hospitality thus insists on encountering the other as she is, in her particularity, resisting any easy erasure of deeply felt distinctions of identity. Thus Letty Russell describes hospitality as “unity without uniformity” ([20], p. 80).

3.2. Risk

In the ancient context and in our contemporary understanding, difference often signals danger. By describing hospitality as risky, today’s feminist theologians acknowledge that difference is commonly perceived as dangerous, without necessarily validating the view of the dangerous other.

Jewish theological ethicist Laurie Zoloth notes that Jewish, Muslim and Christian scriptures praise the “risky hospitality” practiced by Joseph in Genesis when he welcomed the brothers who had formerly threatened to kill him. Risky hospitality is practiced across a relationship of asymmetry, giving to those who “do not deserve it” and “cannot bless you” ([25], p. 384). Zoloth reminds us that risky hospitality will be necessary to welcome refugees when climate change decimates food supplies. Ilsup Ahn agrees that hospitality should be free from consideration of recompense, arguing that to keep an offer of hospitality from becoming a “gift” that incurs an “invisible debt” on the part of the guest, hosts must remember their own indebtedness to God ([26], pp. 259–60).⁸

Many scholars draw attention to risk by deploying Jacques Derrida’s coinage of “hostipitality,” which reminds us that *hospitality* takes place in spaces where *hostility* could potentially have occurred instead (e.g., [24], p. 31). One such scholar, John Blevins, uses queer theory’s call to subvert norms

⁶ My use of “risky” to describe hospitality is indebted to Laurie Zoloth, as I explain further on. Feminist sociologist Megan Moodie has an interesting, different perspective on risk, which she argues is gendered masculine (as in the valorization of risk in financial investing) in contrast to feminine-gendered “peril” which is not chosen [22].

⁷ My use of “despite” here is not intended to eliminate the possibility that host and guest could offer and accept hospitality while *celebrating* their differences. Rather, I intend to signal the view of difference as negative that underlay ancient understandings of hospitality and that too frequently remains today.

⁸ Kelly S. Johnson’s comments on the title of her book *The Fear of Beggars* are relevant here and elsewhere: “Facing beggars, we fear poverty, we fear conflict, we fear drowning in the demands that may arise if we open ourselves to the needs of others, we fear the entanglements of gratitude [...] Yet, many of us also fear that refusing to be family to the poor is refusing membership in the body of Christ, which is the greatest danger of all.” ([27], p. 5).

to describe “queer hospitality” as that hospitality that aims to subvert norms despite ever present risk of violence [28]. Jessica Wroblewski describes how the practice of hospitality in the Biblical context (as throughout much of the ancient world, and today in many formerly colonized countries) offered hospitality to a stranger *before* asking for an account of the stranger’s identity and purposes. This acknowledges both the stranger’s potential vulnerability and her potential power, as she might be a human enemy or a divine messenger in disguise, sent to judge the host ([24], pp. 15–16; see also [29]). Hospitality in its ancient sense and in contemporary understanding involves clear risk to the host.

Wroblewski’s book on the limits of hospitality notes that as humans are finite, so our hospitality must have limits. To navigate these limits justly, it helps to understand hospitality as risky by nature. We must ask, when do those limits on hospitality arise from the legitimate desire of a host to offer her guests safety and when do we place unjust limits on our own hospitality under the guise of safety ([24], p. 20)? Wroblewski warns, “The legitimate need for safety can become so exaggerated that it builds walls of suspicion and hostility in place of limits of hospitality [...] While a measure of security is necessary for the creation of safe and friendly spaces, making the need for security absolute can also become idolatrous” ([24], p. 104). In our practice of hospitality, we also must attend to potential injustices that may undergird our own safety and comfort. In situations of inequality, including racial and economic inequality, Wroblewski notes, one source of *unjust* limits to our hospitality is the fact that security for some comes at the cost of danger and plunder from others ([24], pp. 100–1). Reclaiming a view of hospitality as a risky virtue allows us to pursue a practice of hospitality that refuses to prioritize an idolatrous view of our own safety over others’ basic justice.

3.3. Marginality

It is relatively common to note that Christian hospitality deals with marginality in the persons of guests. For example, Letty Russell finds that “welcome of and advocacy for the marginalized” is a key component of God’s hospitality in the Christian Scriptures. The Hebrew people are challenged in Exodus to welcome the stranger because they themselves were once strangers (Ex 23:9), she elaborates, rescued from their outsider status by God’s hospitality ([20], p. 83).

Christine Pohl moves marginality in hospitality to a more prominent role by noting that Christian hospitality is often motivated or inspired by the *host’s* own experience of being marginalized ([30], p. 121). In fact, hospitality requires hosts with experience on the margins:

The normative practice of hospitality, which in addition to providing food and shelter to strangers also includes recognition, community, and the possibility of transcending social difference, requires hosts who are in some way marginal to prevailing social structures and meanings. Without this marginal dimension, the relation between hosts and guests often serves the more conservative function of reinforcing existing social relations and hierarchies ([30], p. 124).

The emphasis on the marginality of host in hospitality relationships is reinforced throughout the Christian tradition, Pohl finds, beginning with Jesus’ own marginality. Wealthy women in the early church who wished to emulate Jesus’ practice of hospitality “created [their own] marginality” by giving away their wealth in order to travel and minister to those in need ([30], p. 127). This strategy of creating marginality in order to provide hospitality was retrieved throughout Christian history by groups including early Methodists and the Salvation Army ([30], pp. 132–33). Pohl argues that to truly practice hospitality today, Christians may need to “cultivate a constructive marginality” by seeking out friendship and community with those very different from them ([30], p. 124).

3.4. Mutuality

A fourth and final feature of hospitality through feminist lenses is its mutuality. Feminist theologians insist that hospitality can describe an exchange that brings benefit to those on each side. As Wroblewski writes, “the best experiences of hospitality are often those in which guests take on

some of the roles of hosts and hosts also experience the presence of their guests as refreshment and gift" ([24], p. 73). Russell concurs: "Hospitality is a two-way street of mutual ministry where we often exchange roles and learn the most from those whom we considered 'different' or 'other'" ([20], p. 20). Her criticism of the "lady bountiful" model of hospitality which establishes the host's superiority over her needy guest stems in part from the error of the view that hospitality could be present when only one party derives benefit. Meghan Clark concurs, finding that the experience of accepting hospitality from poor women in a global service encounter enabled the recognition of equal human dignity that is required for true solidarity ([31], pp. 133–35).⁹

Hospitality in feminist understanding is a risky, mutual, marginal practice across difference. It is clear how the contemporary world of globalized economic inequality demands such a virtue. Hospitality in a feminist key shares many features with the virtue James F. Keenan, SJ calls Jesuit hospitality, to which I now turn.

4. Jesuit Hospitality

Much has been written about how Francis' Jesuit vocation influences his theology, spirituality, and public actions and writings [18,33]. Neglected to date is the clear influence of the Jesuit charism on Francis' approach to inequality in *Evangelii Gaudium*. Francis diagnoses inequality as a virtue problem for which he prescribes encounter at the margins. His work immediately calls to mind the virtue James F. Keenan calls Jesuit hospitality.

Drawing on the writings of Ignatius and his early followers, Keenan finds that Jesuit identity has always been understood primarily in terms of its apostolic mission.¹⁰ Jesuit hospitality, then, is that hospitality that goes out and meets people on the road where they are. Keenan says that Jesuit priests, and all those who participate in their ministries, are "missioned to the marginalized" ([19], p. 235). "Jesuit identity," Keenan says, "is found in journeying towards those for whom nobody is caring" ([19], p. 237). Pedro Arrupe, SJ, then Superior General of the Society of Jesus, described Jesuit identity in a similar way when he founded the Jesuit Refugee Service. Arrupe noted that since the perilous situation of refugees is by definition global and constantly in flux, the Jesuit charisms of "availability and universality" rooted in St. Ignatius' plan for the Order particularly invite Jesuits to the service of those displaced throughout the world [34]. Keenan invokes this paradigmatic Jesuit ministry when he says that "the model for Jesuit hospitality is the refugee camp [...]. Inasmuch as we go out to the whole world we are called especially to those who find no dwelling place in this world" ([19], p. 240).

Compare this to Francis' perspective in *Evangelii Gaudium*. He says, "All of us are asked to obey [God]'s call to go forth from our own comfort zone in order to reach all the "peripheries" in need of the light of the Gospel" ([2], p. 20.) Elsewhere he says, "The drive to go forth and give, to go out from ourselves, to keep pressing forward in the sowing of the good seed, remains ever present" ([2], p. 21). *Amoris Laetitia*, Francis' apostolic exhortation on family life, might seem like an obvious place to present a vision of hospitality in situ, where a family welcomes others into their own home. Yet even here Francis encourages families to be open to life "by going forth and spreading life by caring for others and seeking their happiness. This openness finds particular expression in hospitality" ([35], p. 324). Far from comfortably settling down into their own insular community, even families are called to

⁹ Chris Vogt also notes that hospitality and solidarity require each other in his treatment of virtues for fostering the common good. In contrast with solidarity, which governs thought and takes the structures of society as its focus, hospitality is a virtue that governs action and focuses primarily on interpersonal relations ([32], p. 401).

¹⁰ By pairing Jesuit hospitality and feminist perspectives on hospitality, I do not mean to suggest that the perspectives are mutually exclusive. Indeed, Keenan identifies as a feminist and many of the feminist scholars I cite are counted as "Jesuits" in Keenan's thought, because they teach at universities in the Jesuit charism. Rather, I hope to show that these schools of thought that may seem to have separate roots overlap in fruitful ways.

practice a hospitality of “going forth.”¹¹ Francis urges those who lead lives of comfort out to the margins, even as he acknowledges how much that journey can challenge us.

Probably one of the most quoted statements from *Evangelii Gaudium* is this: “I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security” ([2], p. 49). Hospitality “out on the streets” is Jesuit hospitality *par excellence*.

Certainly, Jesuit hospitality does not stop when one goes out and meets others out on the road; the quality and character of these marginal meetings is crucial. Francis concretizes and specifies what the practice of Jesuit hospitality looks like as his writings develop a vision of the spiritual practice of encounter. Profounder and more rich than simply being in the same place at the same time, encounter happens when we meet the other where they are. Francis uses the word in *Amoris Laetitia* to describe the first meeting of Adam and Eve, the initial recognition of a companion to relieve human solitude ([35], pp. 12–13). In *Laudato Si'*, he describes “true wisdom” as the result of “generous encounter between persons” ([37], p. 47), urges that cities be planned with an eye to opportunities for “encounter and mutual assistance” ([37], p. 150), and bemoans the limits social media has placed on genuine encounter ([37], p. 49). Encounter clearly must be interpreted in a concrete, embodied way.

Encounter for Francis happens when we are unselfishly open. In fact, the word “open” occurs more than fifty times in *Evangelii Gaudium*. Francis says, “To go out of ourselves and to join others is healthy for us. To be self-enclosed is to taste the bitter poison of immanence, and humanity will be worse for every selfish choice we make” ([2], p. 87). Augustine’s definition of sin as being *incurvatus in se* is clearly behind this language.

Encounter is a human activity, and humans who are obsessed with wealth, who are swayed by the values of the market, are closed off to it. Francis says,

Many try to escape from others and take refuge in the comfort of their privacy [...] Meanwhile, the Gospel tells us constantly to run the risk of a face-to-face encounter with others, with their physical presence which challenges us, with their pain and their pleas, with their joy which infects us in our close and continuous interaction ([2], p. 88).

Married people, he notes in *Amoris Laetitia*, experience the pain and joy of their partner on a daily basis and thus have a particular call to “foster a culture of encounter” ([35], p. 183).

Encounter is about paying attention to the one in front of you, Francis insists. “What the Holy Spirit mobilizes is not an unruly activism, but [a loving] attentiveness which considers the other “in a certain sense as one with ourselves.” [...] Only on the basis of this real and sincere closeness can we properly accompany the poor on their path of liberation” ([2], p. 199). Recall here how feminist theologians insist that hospitality acknowledges and welcomes difference without flattening it.

For Francis, inequality causes and is caused by failures of virtue. The solution is a journey to the margins followed by a spiritual practice of encounter, giving loving attention across difference. Keenan helps us understand how Francis’ response to inequality can be seen as Jesuit hospitality. I hope I have shown how much it also shares with hospitality in a feminist key.¹² Like the hospitality called for by Brink, Russell, Pohl, Wroblewski and others, Francis’ Jesuit hospitality is risky, mutual, and

¹¹ Perhaps Francis was inspired in these reflections by his encounters with Latino/a family practices in the Argentine context. As Nichole Flores notes, “The Latina/o practice of extended communal family promotes solidarity by strengthening the larger community.” ([36], p. 69).

¹² This is not the first work to note Francis’ consonance with feminist perspectives. Christine Firer Hinze notes how Francis and feminists both strive to link local communities in “an inclusive community of justice and care” while respecting the local rootedness and particular cultures of each community ([38], p. 53). Megan McCabe has noted his expressed appreciation for the contributions of feminism in *Amoris Laetitia* [39]. Neither scholar asks or answers whether Pope Francis should be considered a feminist, which would require a far broader evaluation of his actions and statements on women and gender, and neither do I. Noting the consonance between his theological approach and feminist approaches helps us better understand and appreciate both.

takes place at the margins and across difference. It is a challenging, concrete solution to the virtue problem of economic inequality.

5. Conclusions

I have shown how Pope Francis addresses the issue of economic inequality as both a problem of social structures and a problem of virtue. Francis' insistence on the spiritual practice of encounter deepens our understanding of the possibilities of hospitality in both Jesuit and feminist keys. I would like to close with a few more thoughts on practicing the risky virtue of hospitality particularly directed at those most likely to read this—people who are relatively economically comfortable, though not members of the global richest one percent. Francis' description of encounter at the margins is clearly aimed at such people, urging them to go to the margins and encounter people who are poor—a practice of encounter that clearly demands risky, mutual hospitality, and which is clearly called for by our unequal world. But Joerg Rieger and Kwok Pui Lan, in their book inspired by the Occupy movement, add a demand, noting that people who would consider themselves “middle-class” in the U.S. context are better positioned than many for encounters with the global superrich. They propose reaching out to the wealthy, who benefit from global inequality, in a confrontational practice similar to that of Biblical prophecy [40]. In a similar vein, Letty Russell notes the possibility of practicing hospitality as an “outsider within” ([20], p. 21). When thinking about the practice of hospitality in response to inequality, we should prioritize hospitality at the margins, without forgetting opportunities for risky, marginal encounters with those who benefit from global inequality and who desperately need to hear Pope Francis' message of inclusion.

“Hospitality and gestures of solidarity cannot change unjust social systems,” writes Christine Pohl, “but they are a dimension of the transformation process, as important for those with power as for those without it” ([30], p. 135). For Pope Francis, as we've seen, inequality is not simply a problem of unjust social systems. It is also a problem of virtue—both an indicator of virtue deficits in society, and a factor which contributes to their formation. Francis' solution, to risk an encounter at the margins, embodies the practice of the virtue of hospitality in a Jesuit and feminist key. This is the virtue demanded by our unequal world.

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