

## HOSPITALITY by Sandra Shanti



### The Guest House

This being human is a guest house.  
Every morning a new arrival.

A joy, a depression, a meanness,  
some momentary awareness comes  
As an unexpected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all!  
Even if they're a crowd of sorrows,  
who violently sweep your house  
empty of its furniture,  
still treat each guest honorably.  
He may be clearing you out  
for some new delight.

The dark thought, the shame, the  
malice,  
meet them at the door laughing,  
and invite them in.

Be grateful for whoever comes,  
because each has been sent  
as a guide from beyond. -Rumi



### Shadowy Guests as Gargoyles and Primitives

The purpose of gargoyles on cathedrals was to protect the sanctuary. They were water spouts of sorts, allowing rain to flow through them so that it would not erode the mortar in the walls. They were designed to be dragon-like, fire-breathing characters in order to frighten off evil spirits and protect those that they guard.

The primitive figures derive from early African sculptures. They are earthy, unpolished, exaggerated, and, I think, humorous. They also allowed me to specifically include the feminine among the shadows.



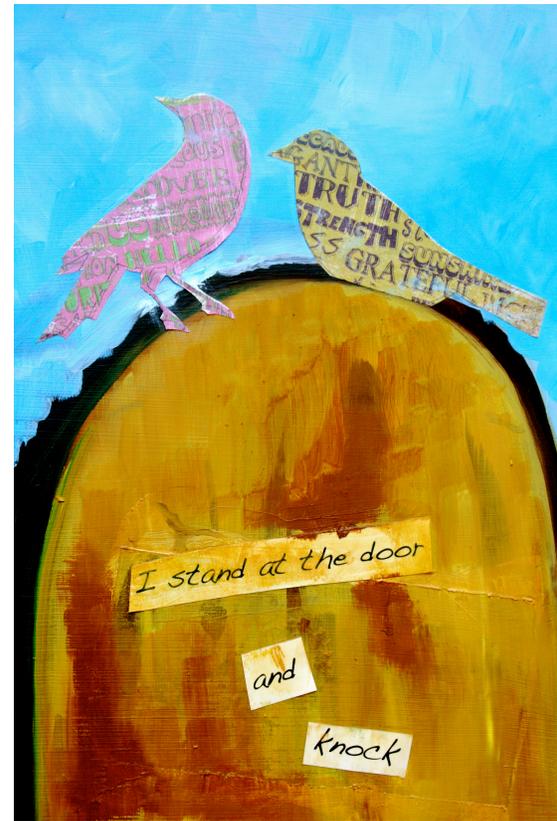
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### The Table, Door, and Spiritual Food

The table is a metaphor for hospitality. Inviting one to pull up a chair is the opposite of trying to slam a door and post a “keep out” notice. It also suggests sharing time together in conversation, thereby gaining understanding and appreciation of the other.

The wheat and wine on the white cloth, which in liturgical practice represents the risen Christ’s grave clothes, are offered to everyone present. It is called the Eucharist which means gratitude. Through God’s humble and gracious brokenness all are invited to be fed and nourished. The scripture pasted on the table reads, “You prepare a feast for me in the presence of my **enemies.**” (Psalm 23:5)



Doors are portals, or ways in and out. Closed they keep out and keep in, open they expose a threshold to be crossed, allowing transition and change. Hence, a doorway creates possibility. The scripture on this door says, “I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in and we will share a meal as **friends.**” (Rev. 3:20)

The use of these two scriptures is to allow interplay between the concepts of friend and enemy, who we love and who we hate, what we say, “Yes” to and what we refuse.

All of this takes place inside a house, my home, which is me. This is where both the Holy Spirit and my own soul reside.

