

PRAYER OF FATHER CYRIL ARGENTI

Our eternal destiny depends on how we treat the immigrant. In each immigrant—Portuguese or North African, Malian or Vietnamese—Christ is hidden. Our eternity comes down to our hospitality or our xenophobia : invite the immigrant to your table, you invite Christ. Let us not forget that the family table prefigures the holy table, that the family meal announces the Eucharistic meal. The welcoming table announces the communion table. We cannot separate the sacrament of the altar—that is to say Eucharistic communion, the divine liturgy—from the fraternal sacrament, that is to say hospitality, the welcoming of the stranger to the family table. . . .

I certainly know that there are limits on the number of guests that we can receive at table, on the number of immigrants that a country can welcome and integrate. We must not ask people to do the impossible. But what can and must change is the mind-set, the attitude toward immigrants. The word ought to be imprinted with deference, with respect, with friendship. It must include, from the out-set, a positive attitude : let us replace the desire to level with respect for differences. Let us rediscover the true France in all its diversity—secular, racial, religious

Father Cyril Argenti (1919-1994), Orthodox priest, involved in the ecumenical dialogue “Just among the nations.”