

Our Commitment to Hospitality

“How many problems in life could be resolved if we would learn to listen,
if we would learn to listen to each other.”

Pope Francis

Benedictine University and the Way of Hospitality

Hospitality is the lifeblood of the Benedictine tradition. As both ideal and practice, it sets the Benedictine experience apart, defining true community in terms of fearless openness to the “other.” Saint Benedict’s way of hospitality, rooted in the biblical command to “love the stranger as yourself” and in Jesus’s vision of love without borders, challenged social mores in his day and is still revolutionary in ours. Benedict’s bold directive to welcome the guest “as Christ” raised Christian hospitality to an unprecedented height and for centuries has given it lasting institutional form.

The first universities in medieval Europe, shaped by over 500 years of Benedictine wisdom, translated Benedictine hospitality into new academic spaces. Respect for unfamiliar perspectives and people from a variety of cultures became the hallmark of Catholic university life at its best. Today, Benedictine University continues this legacy, attentive to the needs of the twenty-first century. In the quest for truth, we encourage the free exchange of ideas and cherish a diverse academic community in which individuals of all faiths and backgrounds can pursue their vocation with freedom and imagination. Fifteen hundred years after Benedict, the way of hospitality is the way of Benedictine University.

A Call to Hospitality: Welcoming LGBTQ+ Persons

Benedictine University, an inclusive Catholic and Benedictine institution of higher education, seeks to provide transformative educational experiences for all students and an empowering environment for employees at all levels. We affirm our support for every member of our community, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and other gender-nonconforming (LGBTQ+) individuals. Drawing from the riches of the Catholic intellectual tradition and the Benedictine spiritual heritage, we welcome LGBTQ+ students, faculty, staff, and alumni as full partners in our project of teaching, learning, scholarship, and service.

The imperative to honor all persons as individuals created in the divine image issues from the heart of the Catholic moral vision. It recognizes each human being as endowed with reason, freedom, and the light of conscience. This mandate, in conjunction with principles of justice and solidarity with the oppressed, rooted in Catholic social teaching, underwrites our commitment to provide a safe and supportive context in which LGBTQ+ people may discern and pursue their life's vocation free from discrimination and harassment. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* makes clear, LGBTQ+ individuals deserve to “be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity.”

Our dedication to the values of Benedictine education especially impels us to care for LGBTQ+ people, recognizing the distinctive challenges they face. For centuries, Benedictines have offered penetrating insights into the dynamics of life in community. Each of the Ten Benedictine Hallmarks formulated by the Association of Benedictine Colleges and Universities enjoins and enhances holistic service to LGBTQ+ persons. Love of God and neighbor, humility, the quest for the common good, and hospitality, inviting us to engage with unguarded openness the ideas and experiences of others, expressly reveal how service to LGBTQ+ individuals aligns with our most fundamental convictions. The call in the *Rule of Saint Benedict* to “welcome every guest as Christ” communicates the supreme principle at the core of our mission: reverence for the dignity of the individual.

Summoned to live up to these ideals, Benedictine University seeks to foster the full flourishing of all its members, including LGBTQ+ students, faculty, staff, and alumni. We regret moments in our past when we may have contributed to the marginalization of any individual or group of persons, and we resolve to participate in the ongoing process of self-critical learning that love and justice require. Striving to be a community characterized by the highest standards of empathy and opposition to all forms of hatred, we welcome LGBTQ+ persons with sincerity and generosity.

A Call to Hospitality: Welcoming People of All Cultures

As our Mission and Vision Statements indicate, Benedictine University is an “inclusive academic community,” welcoming “people of diverse faiths and cultures.” Our Catholic identity and Benedictine Hallmarks call us to love our neighbors, cultivate genuine community, serve the common good, extend hospitality to all, and respect all persons as individuals made in the image of God. Racism and acts of hate and bias are in direct opposition to the fundamental ideals of our University community.

To be silent while others suffer injustice is a form of assent. To abide intolerance without protest is complicity. Failure to tell the truth courageously and chart an anti-racist course for the future contradicts our core Benedictine values and the basic precepts of the Catholic faith. Therefore, we speak out boldly against the diverse manifestations of racism and seek even more boldly to make ours a truly hospitable community ever growing in love and justice.

Catholic social teaching consistently denounces racism as a sin of the individual and a sin of society. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* speaks of “structures of sin” that infect the life of society, despite the best intentions of individuals. In their pastoral letters, the U.S. Catholic bishops condemn “systemic racism” as an evil that gives rise to unjust policies and practices in institutions. According to Catholic social doctrine and the noblest principles of all faiths, the solution to racism is a genuine transformation of both the individual heart and the heart of society itself.

Institutions of higher education, even those affiliated with the Catholic tradition, have never been immune to racist attitudes and actions. In this country, for example, some benefitted from slavery, while others ignored the injustice and indignities of segregation. Today, too many are too comfortable with the effects of implicit bias. Our own University, founded in an age of anti-immigrant prejudice, has never fully lived up to its highest aspirations. Although we may have faltered in our responsibilities to resist racism and other forms of oppression, we commit ourselves to a future in which Benedictine University will be a community of affirmation and acceptance, of inclusion and equity, honoring people of all ethnic heritages and celebrating the racial diversity that makes us stronger.

A Call to Hospitality: Welcoming People of All Faiths and Worldviews

Benedictine University, an inclusive Catholic and Benedictine institution of higher education, seeks to foster the spiritual growth of all students, faculty, staff, and alumni. We affirm our community members in their search for truth. Blessed by remarkable religious diversity, we journey together as a collegial community, cherishing shared values and honoring one another in mindful dialogue.

Faithful to our Benedictine tradition, we seek to live out the principles in the *Rule of Saint Benedict*. The Benedictine vision of life challenges us to practice radical hospitality, inviting us to love our neighbors and recognize “every guest as Christ.” Welcoming individuals of all faith traditions and worldviews is how we express our Catholic mission and Benedictine values. We support interfaith cooperation because of our Catholic identity, not in spite of it.

Daily practice of dialogue is central to the Benedictine University experience. Ten Principles of Dialogue, adapted from Dr. Leonard Swidler’s famous Dialogue Decalogue, serve as guidelines for all civil discourse at Benedictine. We ask all community members and guests to join us in following our Principles of Dialogue:

- 1: DO engage in dialogue to listen and learn—not to argue.
- 2: DO practice dialogue both inside and outside your own community.
- 3: DO be completely honest—both with yourself and with others.
- 4: DON’T compare your ideals with the other's realities.
- 5: DO allow the other to define themselves.
- 6: DON’T go in with preconceptions about where disagreements lie.
- 7: DO view everyone as equal partners in the conversation.
- 8: DON’T tackle hot topics before building trust.
- 9: DO be self-critical of your own positions and community.
- 10: DO try to understand the other's experience, as much as possible.

All documents from the Vatican’s Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity and Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue emphasize the urgent need for positive interfaith relations in today’s world. We are especially inspired by the words of *Nostra Aetate*, the Second Vatican Council’s historic *Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions*: “The Church ... exhorts its sons and daughters to enter with prudence and charity into dialogue and collaboration with members of other religions.”

Pope John Paul II called interfaith dialogue “a path toward the kingdom.” At Benedictine, we treasure the culture of dialogue that enriches every aspect of our shared life. We invite all members of our University community to appreciate religious diversity, to engage in respectful interaction with people of all faiths, and to recognize dialogue as a vital component of transformative Catholic higher education in the Benedictine tradition.