

## LET THE SPIRIT BREATHE . . .



“TASTE THE SACREDNESS OF GRATITUDE.”

Gracious God, may I recognize the abundance of my life, living each day as a gift, transforming my thankfulness into blessings for others. Amen

### *This month . . . Reflections on*

#### *✧ Thanks-Giving and Gratitude ✧*

“To bless whatever there is, and for no other reason but simply because it is, that is what we are made for as human beings.” David Steindl-Rast

To taste the sacred fruits of gratitude is to respond to the Spirit's promptings to live with 'thanks-giving' for God's presence in us and in all things. Thanks-giving is our breath prayer of recognizing what already is; the natural abundance, beauty and wealth of our life.

It is easy, in our busy lives, to lose our perspective of the true meaning and practice of gratitude but when we are aware of daily blessings there is the potential to transform our lives, setting an energy in motion that can produce positive side-effects and recharge the soul. Lesowitz and Sammons, in their book, Living Life As A Thank You, relate this thought: “Gratitude can help us transform our fears into courage, our anger into forgiveness, our isolation into belonging, and another's pain into healing. Saying ‘Thank you’ every day will create feelings of love, compassion and hope.”

When you express any feeling, you amplify that feeling. If you express gratitude, you become more grateful. Gratitude is intentional: it is recognizing God's presence, blessings and gifts throughout our day. This doesn't always come naturally. We need to deliberately work towards creating feelings of grate-‘full’ living.

When thanks-giving is resident within us, we find as with other formational practices, an equally increasing desire to respond, bringing God's blessings, ministry and the richness and fullness of life to others.

### Creating Sacred Space to Celebrate Gratitude

“When a person doesn't have gratitude something is missing in his or her humanity. A person can almost be defined by his or her attitude toward gratitude.” Elie Wiesel

Jan Johnson, writer, speaker and spiritual director, recalled one evening that several remarkable things happened during her day and observed she had prayed for none of them. She calls these ‘Un-prayed for answers’. She grabbed a notebook and jotted down the events. Then she began to write down the moments of the day she was grateful for, especially moments when she was aware of God's presence. Taking time to write her moments of gratitude has become a formational practice. She refers to this time as her ‘date with the Holy Spirit’. Jan lists some benefits from doing this:

“I seem to be less critical and crabby because I'm appreciating the goodness of God's life in me.

More often I think, everything I have, I have received from God (which fosters humility).

More often I pray this re-arranged Jesus Prayer: “Lord Jesus Christ, how you have been merciful to me, a sinner!” (Which then makes me more forgiving of others).

I seem more prayerfully attentive to my day. It's fun celebrating such delightful things.”

Make a date with the Holy Spirit: Make a gratitude journal. Take time during each day to write your moments of gratitude for the ordinary, extraordinary, the prayed for and un-prayed for answers you have received. A word or short phrase is sufficient.

Spiritual Reflections  
November 2011  
Harriet White, Evangelist



### IN THE GARDEN . . .

The symbolism associated with the flower “Agrimony” is gratitude.

#### “A Simple Harmonic Response”

(a simple harmonic response means something done in a straightforward, uncomplicated and effortless manner.)

Matthew is my daughter-in-law’s brother. He is a most delightful person, one who is open and accepting, bringing to those he meets the richness of God’s grace and love. Matthew is Down’s syndrome and as with Down’s syndrome children/adults their innocence lacks the barriers others create in relationships with one another. Matt is one of God’s most incredible teachers. Matt taught me the simple ‘harmonic response’ of saying thank-you.

I had been to Kentucky for a week and knowing that Matt would be at Brian’s and Jen’s home when I returned I brought Matt a gift of fudge. When I entered my son’s home, Matt greeted me with a joyous hug. I told him I had something for him. He said, “Is it a secret?” I replied, “No”. “What is it?” he anxiously inquired. I handed him the fudge. He took it and holding it close to his heart said with apparent delight, “For me? Thank-you, Harriet”. At that moment I was the receiver of a most valued gift; the declaration of ‘Thank-you’ with my name attached to his expression of gratitude. There wasn’t any, “Oh you shouldn’t have or I don’t deserve it”, but a simple, yet powerful acknowledgement of a gift with heartfelt appreciation and joy for another’s thoughtfulness.

I was telling my friend Carol about Matt and my discovery of learning the grace of receiving. Several days later she called to borrow a book. Not having the book I told her I would order it for her and have it shipped to her home. Taking a lesson from Matt, Carol simply said, “Thank-you, Harriet.” For days I pondered the gift these two individuals gave to me . . . acceptance with a simple ‘Thank-You’ with my name attached. Through their ‘simple harmonic response’ of gratitude they affirmed me with their genuine gift of appreciation.

#### Gratitude Exercise . . .

When someone gives you a gift or does something for you, respond with joy and a simple “Thank-You” with the name of the giver affixed to your thank-you. Empower the receiver likewise, with a “You’re welcome”, adding their name. This harmonic response frees both receiver and giver to truly appreciate the moment offering.



### Pause and Prayer

“Happiness cannot be traveled to, owned, earned, worn or consumed. Happiness is a spiritual experience of living every minute with love, grace and gratitude.”  
Denis Waitley

Renee Tilton tells this story about her father Richard Tilton.

I noticed that each morning when my dad went outside to get the newspaper, he stood for a few minutes quietly looking up at the sky spending a moment in reflection. When I asked him what he was thinking, he said that he starts his mornings by appreciating God’s beautiful creation and thinking, “This is the day the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it.”

Renee says as a result of this conversation with her father, each morning as she is leaving her house for work, she locks the front door, she pauses for a moment to thank God for her blessings of home, work, family. Then she looks around at God’s creation and thanks Him for a wonderful day. Renee says, “It puts me in the right frame of mind to start each day.”

Story adapted from Lesowitz and Sammons, in their book, Living Life As A Thank You.

#### In perspective . . .

“If the only prayer you ever say in your entire life is thank you, it will be enough. Meister Eckhart

#### Scripture focus:

“Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good.

His love endures forever.

Give thanks to the God of gods.

His love endures forever.

Give thanks to the Lord of lords:

His love endures forever.” Psalms 136:1-3

“Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.” Philippians 4:6