

GRATITUDE AS A SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

By Sister Jane DeLisle, CSJ

There is great wisdom in Meister Eckhart's statement, "If the only prayer you ever say in your entire life is thank you, it will be enough." While "thank you" is an immediate response for something received, gratitude is more of a prevailing attitude of mind and heart. Living from a place of gratitude is at once fulfilling and freeing. It seems to me that my deepest joy and freedom of spirit comes in the realization that all I have and all I am is a gift from our gracious and loving God.

Every moment holds the potential to encounter God within oneself, in other persons, and even in the ordinary circumstances of life. Gratitude, as a spiritual stance, cultivates the ability to perceive the presence of God in everything. Attention to the present moment cultivates an attitude of gratitude.

A general disposition of gratitude alerts us to what is good in life and to be thankful for the things we have. Our eyes are open to notice and appreciate the things that we often take for granted, like having a place to live, food, clean water, friends, family, etc. Gleaning the graces of small things sensitizes us for the surprise blessings of greater realities.

Furthermore, living from a place of gratitude improves long-term relationships with significant others and with God. Rather than taking someone for granted, gratitude is an

ongoing show of appreciation in relationships, and the practice of gratitude will bring us closer to the ones we love.

For Reflection

"Joy is the simplest form of gratitude." — Karl Barth

Practice of Gratitude:

- Pause to notice what is around you.
- Express gratitude for the little things.
- Tell someone you are grateful and be specific about the way they have helped.
- Each evening, make a mental list of all for which you are grateful.
- Keep a Gratitude Journal. Writing these thoughts down or saying them aloud can even help you stay positive during difficult times.
- Pay attention to what IS good or going well, rather than what is going wrong.

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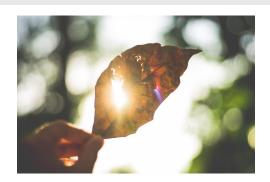
AUG. 19, 2023 | 12 - 5 PM

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