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Grateful

Meditations

for
Every Day in
Ordinary Time



Weeks 23–34

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YEARS A, B, & C

Grateful

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Weeks 23–34

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Introduction

Gratitude is a spiritual practice of faith, hope, and love. It is a practice of faith because we believe that God is the creator of the universe. We offer gratitude to God for the gift of creation, for life, for the air we breathe, for the earth's resources that sustain our lives. Gratitude is a practice that helps us to reverence life and to honor the dignity of every human person.

Gratitude is a practice of hope because we trust in the constant goodness and generosity of God. We offer gratitude, knowing that God is always with us. We have the blessed assurance that God answers all our needs.

Gratitude is a practice of love because we have been redeemed by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. We offer gratitude for the presence of the risen Lord in God's Word, the Eucharist, the Church, and the world.

We need to live in this world with grateful hearts. We need gratitude to be loving, compassionate, and peaceful persons. Gratitude keeps us from becoming cold, selfish, and indifferent toward others. In showing gratitude, we hold a space in our hearts to recognize the gift received and to respect the person behind the gift.

It is the will of God that we give thanks in all the circumstances of life. This book of meditations offers a way to live with a grateful heart in a busy, ungrateful world. It centers us in the gift of God's Word, the source and foundation of the Christian spiritual life. It gives us a thoughtful reflection grounded in the ordinary experiences of life, followed by a question to ponder during the day, a simple prayer, and a challenging practice.

Every day we have opportunities to express gratitude to family members for their unconditional love, to close friends for their constant support, to coworkers who go out of their way to help us, and to all the people who touch our hearts with gentle acts of kindness. Living with grateful hearts helps us to remember that everything we receive is a gift from God and that life is good when we do not take one another for granted.

Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time

YEAR A

Ezekiel 33:7–9

Psalms 95:1–2, 6–7, 8–9

Romans 13:8–10

Matthew 18:15–20

[Jesus said] “If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one.”

MATTHEW 18:15

Reflection: We are not yet perfect. We have made many mistakes in life. Sometimes we are unaware that our actions hurt others. We do not realize that we may have been the source of misunderstandings and conflicts. We struggle to understand why it is so difficult to sustain healthy relationships. As we mature over the years, we discover that we have faults and weaknesses. We are blessed with the presence of people who quietly confront us about our shortcomings and give us a chance to mend our ways.

We do not have perfect relationships nor live in a perfect community. We have been hurt by the people we love. We have been mistreated by family members. We have been the target of a friend’s misplaced

anger. We have been the victim of a neighbor's jealousy. We have been unjustly blamed and punished for a colleague's mistakes. In situations like these, our first instinct might be to retaliate. It is hard to stay in a relationship and live in a community when the people have sinned against us.

The gospel teaches us an important first step in dealing with people who hurt us. We cannot allow anyone to continue to harm us and members of our community. We need to discern an appropriate time and place to confront the person. We need to bring attention to the person's harmful behavior in a clear, loving, and gentle manner. We must give the person time to reflect and change. The gospel challenges us to reconcile with our brothers and sisters. Our mission is to share God's mercy and forgiveness with all people.

Ponder: How do I deal with those who have sinned against me?

Prayer: Lord, I am grateful for your gifts of love, mercy, and forgiveness. Help me to share these gifts with those who have hurt me.

Practice: With a grateful heart I will talk to someone who hurt me.

YEAR B

Isaiah 35:4–7a

Psalms 146:7, 8–9, 9–10

James 2:1–5

Mark 7:31–37

Say to those who are of a fearful heart, “Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God.”

ISAIAH 35:4

Reflection: God is here—in our midst, in our hearts. We have no need to be afraid. God surrounds us, enfolds us, walks with us. God is our protector, savior, adviser, helpmate, companion, friend, and lover. This is the message we are called to convey with our words, our actions, our very lives. This is the good news we are called to bring to those who live in fear, whose lives have been distorted by violence, abuse, illness, and poverty.

In the face of all the fear in our world, we need to be intentional about renewing our faith in God’s nearness, in God’s love, compassion, and tender care. Every day we need to take a moment of quiet, listen for God’s silent voice, and be reassured and strengthened by God’s presence. These few seconds of peace have the power to carry us through the most difficult situations.

We can further strengthen our hearts by reading sacred Scripture and finding one small way to imitate Jesus. Perhaps we can open our eyes to see the

anxiety in another's face and offer a word of comfort. Perhaps we can open our ears to hear the worry in another's voice and offer a compassionate response. Perhaps we can open our hearts to let our love flow out to help bring calm to a fear-filled situation.

We know that God is love. We are made in the image of God's love. In gratitude for this precious gift, we do our best every day to let go of all fear and bring love to all situations, all experiences, and all people.

Ponder: What do I do when I encounter a fearful heart?

Prayer: Lord, I am grateful for your faithfulness. Teach me to bring the comfort of your loving presence to those who are afraid.

Practice: With a grateful heart I will comfort someone who is fearful.