

IMPRINT

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The life-changing power of
GRATITUDE



Grateful for her

Yes

Each time I pray the Rosary, I give thanks for my mother whose daily appointment with Our Lady brought untold graces and fruits into my life, not least of all being my vocation.

“All that I am and hope to be I owe to my mother,” a wise man once said. I can say this first about the Blessed Virgin Mary, whose “yes” opened the way for the coming of our Savior and forever echoes throughout the world! Her fiat continues in each one of us, as we unite our little, and at times faltering, “yes” to hers. Our Lady strengthens us and gives us the courage to believe that God is with us. I am

also filled with gratitude and joy for another faithful mother, whose daily “yes” for over 30 years has built a strong and sure foundation for our religious family and created channels of grace through which the charism of life is poured out into the

world! Mother Agnes Mary’s love and spiritual maternity has overflowed into each of our hearts, and we find the courage to say “yes” as we follow her exquisite model of radical self-giving.

It is within the fruitfulness of such life-giving love that I discover my desire to give the fullness of myself in the new responsibility that has been entrusted to me on behalf of the Sisters of Life. It is a poignant

moment for us as a community, as we give thanks for our founding Superior, Mother Agnes, and the tremendous fruitfulness born of the gift of her life and love poured out for the building and flourishing of our community. On June 1, 1991, when eight women were led by the Spirit to enter a non-existent religious community, we were blessed beyond what we ever could have imagined. Today, the Holy Spirit is moving powerfully in our now 133 Sisters in 13 missions, in six U.S. states, and in Canada! Though transition can be challenging, our hearts are lifted in joy and hope; while being content to receive each day with gratitude, we can only imagine how the next years of growth will unfold! Living in the joy of Our Lady after the Annunciation, we treasure all the grace received until now and the promise of new graces today, tomorrow, and forever. With Mary as a faithful Mother and guide, may we say “yes” to God wholeheartedly in every big and little invitation He makes to us, knowing that future “yeses” depend on our fidelity today.

Know of our prayers for you and your loved ones this Christmas.

In Christ, Our Life,

Mother Mary Concepta, SV

Mother Mary Concepta, SV
Second Superior General of the Sisters of Life





Seeing the GIFT

by Sr. Lumen Glorise, SV

Imagine if we could all see the world around us — every circumstance, conversation, and encounter — with the eyes of a child; how would it change us?

What gratitude isn't. In a life full of ups and downs, good times and bad, it is gratitude that unlocks the door to wonder and joy. Gratitude isn't optimism; it is the disposition of a heart ready to receive the good gifts God desires to give. And gratitude isn't just a feeling; it's an act of faith.

God's love for us is unconditional. We live in a world that says nothing is without conditions, that we have to earn love or prove our worth. Often, we live as though our lives are our own achievement, that we can win God's love. But that is not how God works. He gives His love without reserve. And when we respond to God's unconditional love with unconditional gratitude, we find that our real-life reality is *for us*, that everything truly is a gift. Suffering and difficulties don't have the last say. Whether we see the gift or it still remains a hidden mystery to us, the unchanging truth remains: God's love defines us and imbues our lives with meaning.

Gratitude changes our vision. As we begin to live from this posture of gratitude, and as we allow God's love to

give our lives meaning, we begin to discover that our gratitude grows and our hearts have a greater capacity to see and receive all that God gives us as a good gift. Our vision is transformed, not by rose-colored glasses, but by faith and trust in a good God Who cares about each of us. *You matter to Him.* Ultimately, when we are grateful, our sight is recovered, and we begin to see the gift of God's presence with us here, now.

Jesus, open my eyes that I may see You and recognize the gift of Your presence in my life.

“At the back of our brains ... [there is] a forgotten blaze or burst of astonishment at our own existence. The object of the artistic and spiritual life [is] to dig for this submerged sunrise of wonder; so that a man sitting in a chair might suddenly understand that he [is] actually alive, and be happy.”

-G.K. Chesterton



I Thank God for Everything

*An interview with Raisa,
by Sr. Mary Casey O'Connor, SV*

I am so thankful
that He is the One
writing the story.

Raisa was on her way to fame and fortune, making a name for herself in the Latin Music industry, when she found herself pregnant with twins. All her dreams of success changed drastically. In her loneliness and confusion, Jesus broke through with His plan of perfect love. She would sing a new song — a song to and for the Lord — a song of gratitude!

Raisa, can you tell us a little bit about your story?

Before I met the Sisters of Life, I was going through a rough time. I found out I was pregnant with twins, and I was told that I had a high-risk pregnancy. I was alone, and it was really hard. So I spoke to one of my friends, and she told me about the Sisters of Life. I had never met a nun before. That day, I went downtown and met the Sisters. When I met Sr. Maria Cristina she gave me a hug, and that was the beginning of my blessing. I never felt that way before — so much love! Then she asked me if I was hungry, and she cooked an egg for me. And it was the most delicious egg I ever tasted! I was at a stage in my pregnancy when I couldn't eat anything, and I knew this was from God! I told the Sisters that I wanted to stay in the convent. When I moved in, the Sisters gave me so much love and attention, and they were there for me — anything that I needed. It was truly a loving experience of family. They taught me so much about God, about family, about how to love myself, and about how to move forward with my life as a mom. I never thought in my life I could find a family like the Sisters. I am like, "Wow! Thank You, God, for letting me experience this and allowing me to be one of the women to give birth at the convent." I also thank the Lord because the babies were born here, and they will always know that they were born in a convent with loving and caring Sisters.

What is it like being a mom? Being a mom is the most incredible experience there is. After God, my babies are my true happiness. I thank God that He gave me the opportunity of my life to become a mom. When I wake up in the morning and see my babies smiling, I have never seen something more beautiful than that. I see God in them. Every time they smile back at me, I say, "Thank You, Lord, that You chose me to be a mom, to be the mother of these two angels. I will do whatever I can, God, to be a better mom every day and to teach them about Your Word and help them become good followers of You and good daughters of the Father."



What are you excited to teach the twins? I am excited to take them to church — to teach them about the Word of God. And I will teach the girls to be grateful. I will show them what gratitude means by my own actions. The way that I am going to live will teach them how to be grateful people — how to have gratitude for things, for others, and for life.

What is something you are surprised you are grateful for? I am truly grateful because I never thought I was going to be a mom. And then, God gave me two babies. I am so thankful that He is the One writing the story. And I am so grateful for what is coming. I am grateful to God because He is looking at me every day.

When you give thanks to God, how have you seen Him bless you? When I say "thank You," He blesses me 100 times more — 100 blessings. I thank God for everything in my life. When I go through hard times, I thank God because He knows what is best for me. Even though it is hard, I know that there is something that He wants me to learn. I always pray that I can experience hard times as a grateful person and that I am able to see that it can make me a better person. When I was going through my pregnancy, I said, "Lord, You know what You are doing. Thank You for letting me experience this because I know everything You do is good." Things happen for a reason. I knew that God wouldn't leave me; He doesn't leave His children. Whoever puts their life in God's hands, they have to have hope and gratitude — faith that God will make it better, that God will be there at the end of the road.

How is your life different when you are grateful? Gratitude has so much power. Gratitude has changed my life for the better. Now I believe, and I know, and I am experiencing the love of God. I know that He is here with me, going through this with me. I know that God has always been there for me, and He is making me a stronger believer. Suffering will not be forever; it's temporary. We have to choose gratitude. Grateful people are the happiest people. A grateful soul is a happy soul. Happiness and gratitude go together. When you are grateful, you are always ready for what will happen next. Grateful people keep a smile on their face and love in their heart.

GRATITUDE & change

The phrase “count your blessings” may be familiar to us, but do we realize the impact it can have on shaping our lives? Studies on gratitude have abounded in the field of psychology over the last two decades, and the benefits of gratitude are abundantly clear: better sleep, stronger interpersonal relationships, and a stronger immune system. Being grateful releases stress hormones and leads to better communication, deeper empathy, and more positive emotions and thoughts. **So what exactly is gratitude?** The foremost researcher of gratitude defines it as “the recognition that life owes me nothing and all the good I have is a gift” (Robert Emmons, PhD).

Gratitude leads to a new vision. Pope St. John Paul II spoke of the “contemplative outlook,” which means “being able to discover in all things the reflection of the Creator and seeing in every person His living image” (*Evangelium Vitae*, 83). This outlook “arises from faith in the God of life, Who has created every individual as a wonder.” To be grateful stems from humility, as we acknowledge that life is not a right to be claimed, but a gift that is continually given. To grow in gratitude, we must first notice the good in our lives, and then this good must be interiorized and savored. When we focus on what we’re grateful for, our brains attend selectively to positive thoughts, letting anxious or negative conceptions fade away. We can actually train our minds to discover the good things in life, trusting that underneath it all, life is not something I create or sustain, but it is given to me by the loving God.



“Gratitude is the thing that brings us the most grace.”
–St. Thérèse of Lisieux



“Gratitude is the memory of the heart.”
–St. Mary Euphrasia Pelletier



“The secret of happiness is to ... thank God for what He is sending us every day in His goodness.”
–St. Gianna Beretta Molla

OW

& INGRATITUDE

ge us

Do you ever feel that it's far too easy to remember the negative and forget the good? Well, it turns out that our brains are preconditioned to that reality. Since the Fall, we are conditioned to over-focus on and overreact to negative experiences. Thus the negative and traumatic experiences "stick" while the lighter experiences more easily fade away as inconsequential memories. Since our brains can only focus on either positive or negative information at once, a person who focuses solely on the negative actually subconsciously rewires his brain to only process negative information. Such a pattern can find us stuck in an atmosphere of ingratitude and negativity.

Ingratitude leads to division. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* identifies ingratitude as the failure or refusal "to acknowledge divine charity and to return Him love for love" (CCC 2094). Ingratitude, named as a chief vice by the ancient philosopher Seneca, "is to be avoided for itself, because no vice more powerfully renders asunder and destroys the union of the human race." It has been defined as "the failure to both acknowledge receiving a favor and refusing to return or repay the favor" (Emmonds). At the root of ingratitude are entitlement and self-absorption, which he calls "massive impediments" to gratitude. Being preoccupied with self can cause us to forget the good things in life and from whom they come, be it God or fellow humans, leading us to feel that others always owe us.



—
"[Ingratitude is] the cause, beginning, and origin of all sins and misfortunes."
-St. Ignatius of Loyola



—
"Ingratitude is the greatest hindrance to progress in the spiritual life."
-St. Bernard of Clairvaux



—
"Ingratitude is the root of all evil."
- St. Augustine



Final Profession of Vows

August 5, 2023

St. Patrick's Cathedral, New York

(Back L-R): Sr. Fidelity Grace of Jesus, Emmanuel; Sr. Mary Grace of the Holy Spirit; Sr. Mary Pieta of Joyful Hope in Christ; Sr. Mercy Marie of St. Francis

(Front L-R): Sr. Ann Immaculée of the Cross; Sr. Catherine Joy Marie of the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus; Sr. Zélie Maria Louis of the Love of God

Grateful to belong to Jesus forever

What dignity God bestows on man, on me! How can I possibly make a return for such love? "You are good, all-good, the highest good!" I joyfully whispered into the tender heart of Jesus as I lay prostrate on the sanctuary floor – lost in the mystery of His love, in this relationship of pure gift. Thank You, Father, for claiming me as Your beloved daughter in baptism! Thank You, Jesus, for calling me totally to Yourself in consecration! Thank You, Holy Spirit, for animating me to live these sacred vows!

- Sr. Mercy Marie, SV



First Profession of Vows

(Back L-R): Sr. Joseph Mary Nazareth, Sr. Mara Immaculata, Sr. Lucia Marie, Sr. Amata Eucharistiae

(Front L-R): Sr. Catherine Gemma Thérèse, Sr. Ave Maria



Final Profession of Vows

August 26, 2023

St. Michael's Cathedral,
Toronto, Canada

(Above L-R): Sr. Gaudia Maria Magdalena of the Heart of Jesus with Archbishop Francis Leo and Mother Mary Concepta



MEET OUR NEW POSTULANTS

Back Row L-R: Mary Rose, Colleen, Peyton, Kaler, Rachel; Front Row L-R: Alicia, Meg, Katie, and Laura

Name: Laura

Hometown: Lake Charles, LA

Studies: Canon Law

Interests: The Old Testament prophets, gardening, the harmonica

Grateful for: The unending intentionality of Jesus' heart, the gift of family, the home of the Church

Name: Katie

Hometown: Ann Arbor, MI

Studies: Communications, Marketing, Nonprofit Administration

Interests: Bl. Solanus Casey, storytelling through video, asking questions, Jewish studies

Grateful for: My baptism, Jesus in the Eucharist, my parents, 10 siblings, 13 nieces and nephews

Name: Rachel

Hometown: Oak Lawn, IL

Studies: Pediatric Audiology

Interests: Volleyball, comedy, disability studies, learning

Grateful for: Christ, my family, friends, good jokes, great role models

Name: Mary Rose

Hometown: Columbus, OH

Studies: Nursing

Interests: Nature, the lives of saints, cooking, pickleball

Grateful for: My baptism — the great mystery that I am the Father's daughter and He dwells within me

Name: Kaler

Hometown: Hull, MA

Studies: Biochemistry, Psychology

Interests: Sailing on the ocean, music, poetry, watching birds

Grateful for: Family, friends, and that God made people have different laughs

Name: Meg

Hometown: Scottsdale, AZ

Studies: Nursing

Interests: Reading, drawing, guitar, singing, seeing God in all of His creation

Grateful for: The Eucharist, my dear family and friends, all who have upheld me with their generosity and prayers

Name: Colleen

Hometown: Glenview, IL

Studies: History

Interests: Running, reading, praise and worship music, playing sports

Grateful for: The gift of my life, Jesus in the Eucharist Who is life, friends, and family

Name: Alicia

Hometown: Washington, MO

Studies: Liberal Arts and Integrative Studies

Interests: Hiking in the mountains, drinking coffee, reading the saints

Grateful for: Family, early mornings, hymns to Jesus, the smell of incense, star-filled skies, friends seeking holiness

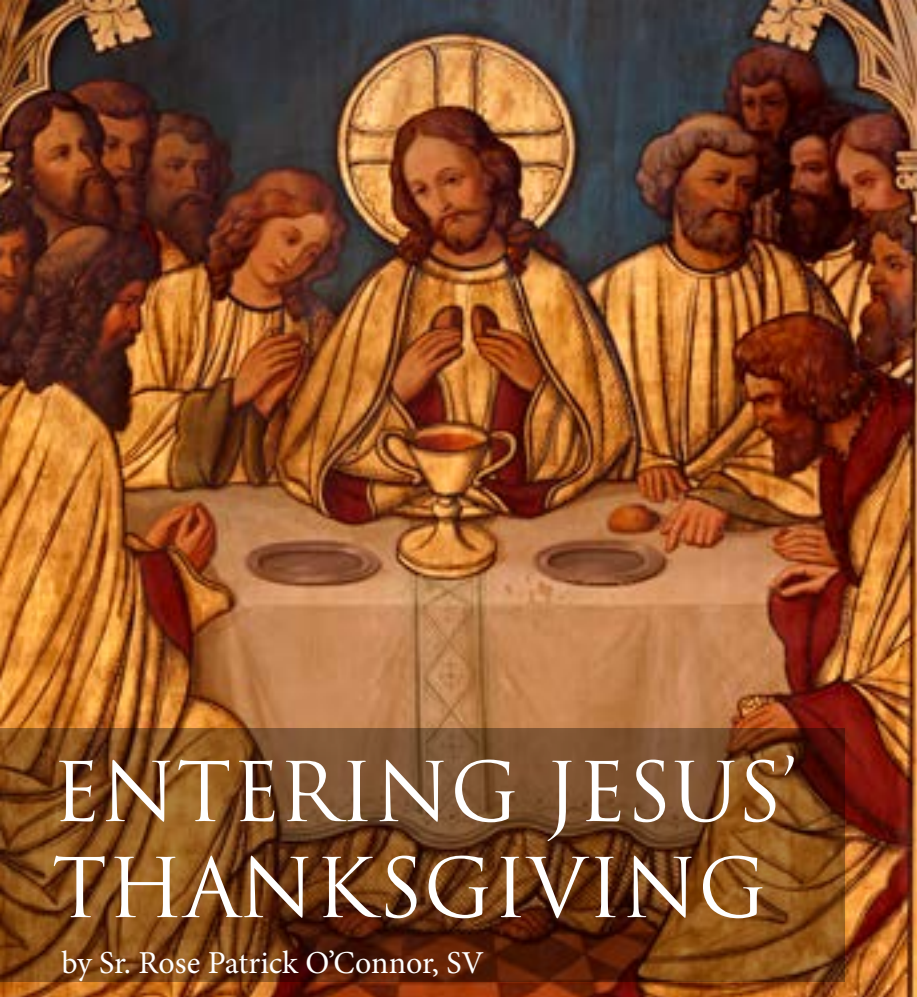
Name: Peyton

Hometown: Pensacola, FL

Studies: Nutrition Science

Interests: Watching the sunrise, reading and writing poetry, being outside, strong coffee

Grateful for: The way God shows me His own heart through others



ENTERING JESUS' THANKSGIVING

by Sr. Rose Patrick O'Connor, SV

Have you ever seen a little child bring a drooping dandelion to his mom? He gives it to her and watches in expectation to see how she will respond. When she smiles and thanks him, he's filled with delight and runs off to see what else he can give her. Compare this with the image of a chef who has worked hard to prepare a wonderful steak dinner. He watches as the meal is brought to the table, but he is disappointed when the customer barely glances at the plate and instead complains about the silverware.

It makes all the difference when we know our love is being received. In the Christian life, we might sometimes feel that our prayers or acts of virtue don't mean much. God seems so big, and we are so small. Or we can be discouraged by our personal failings and what we see around us — news of wars, scandals, conflict, and confusion.

But here's the truth: Jesus took on a human heart capable of feeling joy, sorrow, love, and pain. God truly does receive our love. Each time we do something for love of Him, He receives it. He sees it. He treasures it. Even though God is infinitely perfect

Each time we
do something
for love of Him,
He receives it.

Father,

I abandon myself into Your hands; do with me what You will. Whatever You may do, I thank You: I am ready for all, I accept all. Let only Your will be done in me, and in all Your creatures — I wish no more than this, O Lord. Into Your hands I commend my soul: I offer it to You with all the love of my heart, for I love You, Lord, and so need to give myself, to surrender myself into Your hands without reserve, and with boundless confidence, for You are my Father. **-St. Charles de Foucauld**

and has no need of us (*cf. CCC 1*), He chose to make Himself vulnerable to our love. There are many moments in Scripture when Jesus expressed gratitude. When Mary anointed His feet with costly perfume, He said, "She has done a beautiful thing to me" (*Mk 14:6*). When ten lepers were healed of their disease, Jesus was consoled by the one who returned to thank Him (*cf. Lk 17:11-19*). The night before His Passion, Jesus praised His Father for the gift of His disciples (*cf. Jn 17:24*).

Jesus' whole life and mission is caught up in gratitude. One of our priest friends, Fr. Braden Wagner, says of Jesus: "The Word from all eternity is receiving the gift of Himself from the Father — and the natural, eternal response is gratitude." The Mass itself is even called *Eucharist*, which comes from the Greek word for thanksgiving. Gratitude isn't just something extra or a politeness; gratitude is central to Who Jesus is. Let us live in His image and allow gratitude to be central to who we are, too!

Challenge: Find time today to come to Jesus in prayer and thank Him for something — for a particular moment from your day, or for the gift of baptism, your family, or your work. Then bring Him some victory, some act of love you made. Give it to Him, and hear Him say, "You have done a wonderful thing for Me. Thank you."

The secret ignition to the spiritual life:

Making a good thanksgiving after Communion

At every Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, God actually comes to us — for real. Jesus gives the full gift of Himself in the Eucharist and draws us to intimate union with Him.

Distraction is real. In the silence after receiving Holy Communion, we can sometimes find ourselves distracted. People are moving past us in the aisle, Mass is about to end, and our thoughts wander towards the family barbeque happening afterwards ... What can help keep our gaze in the present moment and fully receive the gift that has been given?

Remember: The time after you receive Jesus is, by far, the most powerful time of prayer in your entire life! The God Who created the cosmos is literally in your body. You can't get any closer to Him than that. Ask big. Tell Him everything. Expect a lot.

Tips:

- Our friend, Fr. Roger Landry, used to teach first communicants simply to return to their pews, close their eyes, and silently whisper, "Thank You! Thank You! Thank You!"
- Ask for the grace of recollection. And when distractions come, don't be discouraged. Simply turn back to Our Lord and begin in that moment.
- Read a prayer of thanksgiving from the Scriptures. Perhaps the Magnificat (*Lk 1:46-55*) or one of the Psalms (e.g. *Ps 92 and 116*).
- Write your own prayer of thanksgiving and return to it as a regular touch-point throughout your day.



by Sr. Rose Patrick O'Connor, SV

A prayer that will change you

What's your routine at the end of the day? Many saints recommend taking time each evening to be with the Lord and review the day together. This prayer is called the Examen. This is different from an examination of conscience, where we are looking at the places we turned away from God; this is more like a "cup of tea" with Jesus. It's a 5 or 10-minute look over the day with all its ups and downs. *Lord, where did I see You today? And where did I experience Your gaze of love in a particular way today?*

St. Ignatius of Loyola gives us five steps to the Examen:

1. Thanksgiving
2. Asking for the Holy Spirit's enlightenment
3. Reviewing the day
4. Asking forgiveness where needed
5. Looking ahead to the next day

St. Ignatius says we don't have to get through all five steps. If we find ourselves drawn to spend more time on any point, we can stop right there.

It's okay if we spend our entire time on the first step, thanksgiving. St. Ignatius says that if the only thing we do at the end of the day is say, "Thank You," that is enough.





MEET THE “BOBFATHER”

by Sr. Charity, SV

Affectionately nicknamed “The Bobfather,” Bob Connelly, 81, has been part of the Sisters of Life family longer than many of the Sisters. Multiple times a week, he rides his bike to one of our Manhattan convents to take out the recycling, fix door knobs, and iron the sacred linens used for Mass — all with a twinkle in his eye and a gentle smile.

We met Bob in 1999 one providential evening. He was rollerblading in Manhattan; his usual route being blocked by construction, he turned down 51st Street. There he spotted a Sister unloading groceries from a car and offered to help. He recalls with a smile that the Sister looked him up and down — six-foot-four, wearing cutoff jeans and a bandana — and replied, “Not tonight. Thank you.”

“But,” she added (we’re all forever grateful for that “but”), “If you’d like to come back on a Volunteer Saturday, we’d love to have you.”

“Alright,” Bob thought, “What’s one Saturday?”

24 years later, here we are.

Known for his cleverly-composed poems, teasing kind-

ness, and genuine interest in every person he meets, Bob looks at the world with uncomplicated gratitude.

“The Lord is kind and merciful. His love and His mercy endure forever. That’s what I say every day when I wake up,” he said.

After the celebration of his 77th birthday, Bob left the following note for the Sisters: “You know how much I value good grammar, syntax, diction, and elocution. Having said that, you can imagine my dismay at being unable to adequately express my sincere gratitude to all the Sisters who may have played even the smallest part in making the evening so WONDERFUL/MEMORABLE!”

Bob said he recognizes the blessings we receive are “not by chance or coincidence.” “[People say] ‘what a beautiful day.’ Well, this is the day the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad.”

But it wasn’t always this way for Bob. “I thought I was entitled to everything,” he explained.

Raised Catholic, Bob stopped attending church in his 20s, searching for happiness, instead, on Caribbean beaches, at tennis matches, and in nightclubs. It wasn’t until his father passed away in 1992 that he began to search for a deeper meaning in life. Confronted by the reality of death, Bob thought, “Maybe it’s time to rethink my life ... a life of just doing whatever I want to do, whenever I want to do it.” He made his way to St. Agnes Church in Manhattan where he asked to meet with a priest. After several meetings, Bob returned to the Sacrament of Confession and began receiving the Eucharist again. Now, he attends Mass daily.

“From now until the end of my days, there are never enough prayers and time to say, truly, I am so thankful for every blessing of my life,” he shared.

Bob says his lens of gratitude didn’t develop all at once. Over the years, he has learned to see life as a gift. One of his best teachers was his sister, Marita, who passed away in 2022. She suffered with poor health, including trouble breathing, walking, and swallowing. Yet, Bob said, “She never became bitter or angry.”

He told her, “Marita, I don’t have a lot of heroes in my life. But if I did, they would be exactly like you.”

For Bob, the cross is not an affront to gratitude but the very source of it. One day a Sister walked into the ironing room and saw Bob with tears in his eyes. He had been ironing the sacred linens, or “holy cloths,” as he calls them. The water droplets from the steam had gathered together forming a cross in the fabric. It was, for him, a moment of grace, a reminder of the unmerited gift of Redemption. He said over and over again, “Look what our dear Lord did for me. I am not worthy.”

It seems fitting that Bob irons the “holy cloths” each week. They contain, perhaps, an invitation: to see the threads of our lives not as a tangled mess, but as woven together by God into something sacred. The Bobfather’s life is, indeed, a very holy cloth.



What if receiving gratitude could actually make you holy?



What to do when someone says “thank you”

by Sr. Rose Patrick O’Connor, SV

Has someone ever come up to you and said, “Thank you for doing that!” and you found yourself unsure how to reply? “Um ... thanks ... you’re pretty great too ...”

Gratitude can be uncomfortable to receive. Maybe we don’t think we did a very good job. Or perhaps we did something excellent, but we don’t want to become proud and puffed up. **But what if receiving gratitude could actually make you holy?**

Fr. John Paul, C.F.R., says the best thing to say when someone thanks us is simply: “You’re welcome!”

“It is a great blessing if people thank us. Don’t try and be all falsely humble and say, ‘It’s all Him [God].’ Sure, it’s all Him, but that’s not what they’re saying — they could go and tell Him that! They’re telling you. Thank you for being present there and allowing the Lord to work through you so that I receive something.”

God’s grace is real, and so is your “yes.”

After we receive someone’s thanks, Fr. John Paul says we can unite that moment of gratitude with Jesus’ thanksgiving sacrifice at Mass: “We’re bringing up to the altar those things that we’ve encountered since the last time we left Mass. We’re bringing back thanksgivings, and we’re bringing up sacrifices. And we consciously place them in that ciborium as the offertory comes up.

“If I’m actively, consciously, participating in offering those sacrifices, I’m participating in the sanctification of the world.”

Fr. John Paul says giving and receiving gratitude helps us see the particular charism God has given us.

“Charisms are gifts; they’re manifestations of the Holy Spirit Who dwells in us, unifying our mission to Christ’s.

“It’s important for us — as we continue to go deeper in relationship with the Lord and as we’re starting to learn about who we are and the mission that we have — to pay attention to what people thank us for.”

Gratitude can truly open our hearts to see and receive the gifts of God — for our flourishing and the sanctification of the world.

Fr. John Paul, C.F.R.



Is it really possible to be always grateful?

It's almost scandalous, what St. Paul writes:

"Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" (1 Thess 5:16-18).

Is it really possible to be always grateful? How can we give thanks when we're going through a trial or suffering deeply?

It's important to remember that we're not made for suffering. Suffering in itself is an evil. The Lord never delights in our suffering. "God did not make death, nor does He rejoice in the destruction of the living ... God formed man to be imperishable; the image of His own nature, He made them... (Wis 1:12; 2:23)." Suffering was never part of His plan for us. Sin brought suffering into our reality, and our humanity is repulsed at the taste of it. And that's what Jesus entered into. He became one of us to take on every experience of human suffering, pain, and death, so that never again would any of us live anything on our own or apart from Him.

"Do not forget what I have done for you,' Jesus says to us incessantly. When we are overwhelmed by sorrows of any kind, or are perhaps suffering the pangs of a devouring guilt that can tempt us to despair; when it seems that our life has reached a dead-end either through the treachery of others or through our own grave errors: then our only salvation is to believe with all our might in the power of Christ's creative anticipation, that is, in the sovereign ability Christ ... to take an evil deed that will lead to His own crucifixion and providentially transform it into an event of Resurrection ... No sin we commit can defeat the Mercy of God, and ... no wound that is inflicted by others on us can surpass the power to heal of the Divine Physician ... [Christ] ... has made it so that 'all my sufferings already belong, in advance, more to Him than to me' (T.S. Eliot)."

-Erasmus Leiva-Merikakis (Fr. Simeon, O.C.S.O., Trappist Monk)

In every situation, we can dare to be grateful to and for Jesus, Who alone descended into our personal hells, Who alone can bring meaning to the meaningless pain of suffering, Who alone can draw good out of evil.



Servant of God Jacques Fesch knew this well.

After being convicted of murdering a policeman, he experienced a profound conversion in his prison cell months before his execution. In a letter to his mother, he wrote: "I can well imagine that you are spending sleepless nights, and that your days are filled with anguish, sorrow, and pain. What can we do? There is only One Who can heal these wounds. Ask Him to do it. Be very sure that God, in His divine providence, has foreseen this grief which overwhelms you today, and which may perhaps compel you to draw a little closer to Him."

BECAUSE OF JESUS

Because of Jesus, sin and evil no longer have the last say

Because of Jesus, suffering has lost its meaninglessness

Because of Jesus, every cross has an incalculable value

Because of Jesus, pain is not the end of my story

Because of Jesus, what once separated me, now unites me intimately with Him

Because of Jesus, I experience nothing on my own

Because of Jesus, there is no darkness that cannot be conquered

Because of Jesus, every wound can become a place of new life

Because of Jesus, I am known, understood, and never forgotten in my suffering

Because of Jesus, my life has inestimable value

Because of Jesus, I have found the measure of my worth

Because of Jesus, love has the last word

Because Love is the last word. And His name is Jesus. Jesus, I thank You.



His *mercies*
are new each morning

Judith's Story*

Hope & Healing After Abortion

One day, an announcement was made during Sunday Mass at my local church: "For any woman who has suffered an abortion, and would like to seek support and counsel by connecting with the Sisters of Life, there are flyers with more information by the entrance hall." Once the Mass ended, I made my way to the flyers, being careful not to be seen. This announcement is what I would ultimately understand as our Lord's individualized call to me. I was seeking Him, and He made it so that I could find Him.

He revealed Himself to me. Through my continued journey of hope and healing with the Sisters, I have been introduced to, and continue to be reminded of, His love and merciful heart. On that cold winter morning of my initial Hope & Healing retreat at the convent, I experienced a soul-pouring, heart-wrenching catharsis envelope over 30 years of fear, shame, grief, and self-hatred. A veil of ignorance was lifted, and I was gifted with the clarity of understanding myself as His beloved daughter.

That afternoon, as I approached the doorway of the convent dining room to gather for lunch, what touched me so profoundly were the welcoming smiles and pure love that emanated from the Sisters. At that moment, I knew He was communicating His love. He was telling me "Come, it's time to sit and eat. I will feed you. You have purged this shame; now let Me fill you with the nourishment of My love and mercy." The experience of receiving His mercy has helped me to live a more gratitude-centered existence. I once viewed grief and suffering as punishment, but I now see these as opportunities to reach for Him, trust in Him, and honor Him. For these gifts, I will forever be grateful.

*named changed for anonymity

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We are offering our Novena of Christmas
Masses for you and your loved ones.

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125 Lafayette Avenue, Suffern, NY 10901 • (845) 547-2630

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Text: (212) 203-8716 Co-workers of Life: (646) 882-1087

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1818 N. 23rd St. Phoenix, AZ 85006 • Call/Text: (480) 389-5650

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HOPE & HEALING after abortion

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