

Heart ♥ to ♥ Heart



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Here in the United States, November is the month when our thoughts and actions turn to gratitude as we celebrate the feast of Thanksgiving on the fourth Thursday of November. While recent national and international events can challenge our ability to be grateful, we do not lose sight of the gifts and blessings. This issue of *Heart to Heart* offers a variety of reflections and prayers on the theme of thanksgiving and gratitude. Certainly, we join together in thanksgiving for the 488th anniversary of St. Angela's founding of the Company of St. Ursula on November 25!



Pope Francis and Gratitude

“Thanksgiving is a hallmark of an authentic Christian life. Above all, let us not forget to thank: if we are bearers of gratitude, the world itself will become better, even if only a little bit, but that is enough to transmit a bit of hope.”

St. Angela Merici and Gratitude

In the living of her life, Angela had come to know a God who entrusts with gifts and treasures, who does marvelous things and provides wonderfully well, who was her Lover, or rather the Lover of Us All. Her response was a grateful heart.

At the end of her life, as she dictated her *Rule*, her *Counsels*, and her *Testament* or *Legacies*, she was intentional about including a call to gratitude in the Prologue of each document:

- “You have to thank God infinitely that, to you especially, God has granted such a singular gift.” (*Rule*)
- “You have to thank God most greatly that God has deigned to see to it that you are among those God wants to spend themselves in safeguarding such a treasure.” (*Counsels*)
- “Oh, how much you have to thank God for this...” (*Testament/Legacies*)

How, in the spirit of Angela, might we nurture and live an attitude of gift-mindedness and gratitude in our lives?

Brother David Steindl—Rast and Gratitude

Brother David Steindl-Rast — 97 year-old author, scholar, and Benedictine monk — is beloved the world over for his enduring message about gratefulness as the true source of lasting happiness. Known to many as the “grandfather of gratitude,” his books and talks have been an inspiration for many to live more gratefully:

*“Everything is a gift.
The degree to which we are awake to this truth
is a measure of our gratefulness,
and gratefulness is a measure of our aliveness.”*

*“Life is given to us; every moment is given.
The only appropriate response therefore is gratefulness.
When we wake up to the fact that everything is a gift,
it is only natural to be thankful...”*

Brother David’s TED talk on gratitude (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UtBsI3j0YRQ&t=11s>) has been viewed almost 10,000,000 times. Another helpful resource is the website inspired by him and his work, www.grateful.org.



Songs of Gratitude

“Grateful: A Love Song to the World”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sO2o98Zpzg8>

“I Am Grateful”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yOM2d1YomWA>



Thanksgiving Is . . .

**Thanksgiving is
a time of gratitude to God, our Creator and Provider,
whose guidance and care go before us . . .
and whose love is with us forever.**

**Thanksgiving is
a time to reflect on the changes,
to remember that we, too, grow and change
from one season of life to another.**

**Thanksgiving is
a time of changing seasons, when leaves turn golden
in Autumn's wake and apples are crisp
in the first chill breezes of fall.**

**Let us remember the true meaning of Thanksgiving.
As we see the beauty of Autumn,
let us acknowledge the many blessings which are ours . . .
let us think of our families and friends . . .
and let us give thanks in our hearts. Amen.**

(Author unknown. From Jesuit Resources)

Scripture and Gratitude

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:6-7)

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God through him.” (Colossians 3:16-17)

“Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!” (Psalm 95:2)

“Oh, give thanks to the God, who is good, for God's steadfast love endures forever!” (Psalm 107:1-3)

Gratitude for the Little Moments^{*}

Joyce Rupp

gratitude, yes,
for all the big things
that stand tall,
thick with abundance,
joy, fruitfulness.

I cannot help
but applaud
their presence.

but deep thankfulness
for the bite-sized
pieces of my life?
I had not thought of them,
those little snippets of time
so easily consumed
in the hurry and blur
of pretentious days.

the little moments.
assumed and presumed,
slip quickly through
the fingers of my busy life.

November gestures
with a wrinkled brown hand,
beckons me wisely
to consider
those fleeting moments of grace,
in things quickly passing:
a walk on a musky-wooded path,
a cup of coffee silently savored,
a birdsong in the squeaky hours of dawn,
the gentle touch of a liver-spotted hand,
a loving letter from a grateful stranger,
a fading crescent moon in a royal blue sky.

I turn to gather
finely layered remnants like these
in the come and go of my days,
and discover, with surprise,
how quickly my inner room
is a harvest place of gold.

(*Taken from *Out of the Ordinary* ©2000, 2010 by Joyce Rupp.
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