

## **The Grateful Heart: Gratitude as a Spiritual Path\***

“If the only prayer you say is Thank You,  
that would be enough!” (Meister Eckhart)

“Mysticism is felt-gratitude for everything.” (Anthony deMello, S.J.)

### **The Grateful Leper (Lk 17: 11-19)**

“We cannot be grateful for everything; but we can in every situation be grateful for something.” (Br. David Steindl-Rast)

- Thanksgiving (“Thank You”) and Gratefulness (“Wow”)
- Grateful Disposition
- Individual Differences: 50% genetic disposition; 10% circumstances; 40% intentional activities

### **A Path to Happiness and Holiness**

Gratitude and Subjective Well-Being or Happiness: Positive Psychology  
Gratitude, Love, and Service: Desire to DO thanks--to “pay it forward”

### **Obstacles and Gateways**

#### **Obstacles**

Sense of Entitlement  
Envy  
Consumerist Attitude  
Regrets  
Resentment

#### **Gateways**

Poverty of Spirit  
Content with Good Enough  
“Our Heart...Restless....”  
Letting Go  
Forgiveness

### **Fostering Grateful Living**

**Gratitude is the natural response to the gratuity of everything.**

The British writer G.K. Chesterton extends the practice of “saying grace” to include many events of his day: “You say grace before meals. All right. But I say grace before the concert and the opera, and grace before the play and pantomime, and grace before I open a book, and grace before sketching, painting, swimming, fencing, boxing, walking, playing, dancing and grace before I dip the pen in the ink.”

## **Deepening Appreciation**

Fostering appreciation begins with seeing commonly taken-for-granted things with fresh eyes, as Patricia Schneider's poem, "The Patience of Ordinary Things" delightfully illustrates:

It is a kind of love, is it not?  
How the cup holds the tea,  
How the chair stands sturdy and foursquare,  
How the floor receives the bottoms of shoes or toes.  
How soles of feet know where they're supposed to be.  
I've been thinking about the patience of ordinary things,  
How clothes wait respectfully in closets  
And soap dries quietly in the dish,  
And towels drink the wet from the skin of the back.  
And the lovely repetition of stairs.  
And what is more generous than a window? (p. 153)

## **Rekindling Wonder**

Alexis Zorba's stance of amazement before daily realities, hardly noticed by most people, impressed the narrator of the novel:

I felt, as I listened to Zorba, that the world was recovering its pristine freshness. All the dulled daily things regained the brightness they had in the beginning, when we came out of the hands of God. Water, women, the stars, bread, returned to their mysterious, primitive origin and the divine

## **Pausing to Notice: The Practice of Crabgrass Contemplation**

- Showing Up
- Slowing Down
- Staying Still
- Staying With

## **Telling our Story as a Grace-filled Tale: God's "Afterwards"**

- "Dis-membering" in order to "Re-member" our story
- Mary's Magnificat: A Hymn of Thanksgiving for God's Faithfulness

\*Based on *The Grateful Heart: Living the Christian Message* by Wilkie Au and Noreen Cannon Au (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2011)