

A question we have been hearing since our earliest days, and one that we will continue to hear for the rest of our lives is “What are you thankful for?” The Thanksgiving holiday this week will hopefully call to mind the answers and deepen them. Of course that is what Thanksgiving is about: recognizing our gratitude for what we have and sharing it with others.

If Thanksgiving were every day, food comas would be a pandemic. Nonetheless, I think it would make us doubly aware of our gratitude. Although perhaps the true measure of gratitude is its endurance when there is no formal celebration of it. Thanking people and recognizing our appreciation of anything really has to come from ourselves without being prompted.

But it’s a challenging task every day to keep at the forefront of our thoughts what we are grateful for. And sometimes expressing that is even more difficult. When a tragic event occurs or something bad happens, it is most trying to find anything worthy of thanksgiving. Even unto the seemingly small anxieties, I know I can lose sight often enough of what I’m grateful for. Whether the daily routine leaves me blind to thanksgiving or I feel overwhelmed or lonely, what wanes in those times is the degree to which gratitude affects me. Though when we succeed in holding close that gratitude for whatever it is it can steadily guide what we think, say, and do. It’s another challenge also to find the grace to not take things for granted. However, this can make us realize our appreciation even more.

When we are grateful for something, it makes us mindful of our dependence upon others and God. It in turn grows that love and respect in our heart. Gratitude allows us to think beyond ourselves, and at its deepest, make us selfless. It will propel one to give back to the person he or she appreciates. And if it’s something material, our gratitude for that would seek to share it with others.

If we look for it, there is a lot that we can be thankful for on campus and in our life. Not everyone receives a college education surrounded by a thriving community. Every day we have easy access to food and water, with employees who give it their all at a hard job. Whether we will spend our Thanksgiving with family or friends, either home or at school, we are still blessed to have people to be with. There is more to be thankful for than we really know.

One role of gratitude is to turn our hearts ultimately towards God. A good time to search and recognize gratefulness then is in prayer. The gratitude sown into our hearts forms us on our mission in life. It helps us to be everything we can be to others while humbling us to know that all good things come from God.

If we pray and listen to God, if we give ourselves to Him, we will see indeed what more there is to be thankful for. Our thanks will grow deeper for everything. It may start at the life each one of us has been given. The life that is more special than we really know, even in our darkest times. We are beheld in the Lord’s eyes as His most beloved son or daughter. It is a true love that is beyond us, but that which we can come to know more every day.

I'm sure we can all be grateful in some way for the Knights. Living and believing the Catholic faith would be twice as hard if we didn't do it together. The men in the council have no doubt strengthened me and given me continuing examples that help me grow and carry on each day. I can bet each of us will likely experience lifetime friendships from this group.

And this faith that God has revealed to us through Jesus is reason to give thanks, and also to all those who help us know it. Especially as we ended the Year of Faith today, we look to the wonder of our faith and realize our thanksgiving for it. It still amazes me and always will, to think that Jesus was on this very Earth that we all stand upon right now. And that we can achieve eternal life- beyond anything we think or can really imagine- warrants the deepest gratitude.

Let us always remember though and pray for those who don't know what to be thankful for. We pray for those who don't recognize anything good in their lives or who have only seen life in its darkness. We pray for those without family or loved ones, especially for the homeless in this week. And we pray that we will recognize how blessed we are each day. As Knights, we can help others come to know life's goodness. We are called to help others see that life is worth living.

I wish each of you a peaceful break and a happy Thanksgiving.