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Giving Thanks

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Giving Thanks

We can give a card or note to someone, and we might present a gift of some kind, but if we pause to consider the meaning of "giving thanks," we might recognize that the experience is almost always spiritual. Perhaps only through reflection do we see that there is much more to giving thanks than whatever we do by way of words, gifts, and gestures.

When we give material gifts to others as a means of expressing our appreciation, we hand over those things from our possession to theirs; we once had them, and now they belong to the recipients to use as they choose. But when we give thanks from within, we do not transfer something we had to another person who will thence possess it, but we give of ourselves in dignified relationship. We give nothing away. Rather, we reveal our intention and attitude of regard towards others, and this we do from our hearts, not our material resources.

In giving thanks, we make ourselves a bit transparent by letting others know something about us, about our values, especially the importance we place on gratitude. By giving thanks, we also receive at least as much as we give through the satisfying bonds that we establish in communicating gratitude. Also, most of us experience joy in the mutual recognition of good deeds and intentions, kindnesses and all else that elicits gratefulness and praise.

We reveal too, when we give thanks, whatever implicit or explicit understanding we have of who God is, as source of all that is good. In a manner both honest and spontaneous, we have found and acknowledged particular manifestations of God in the thoughts and actions of others. Giving thanks, when it involves our minds and our hearts, is of much more significance than mere words and symbols can suggest.

Many of us take pleasure in giving thanks to people we know, understanding that we might, in some small way, contribute to their happiness, to their sense of self-worth and to their recognition that they "count," at least in our eyes. But who could we meet, in a shop or store, or any place where people interact in any way, who would not appreciate an expression of gratitude when it is sincere? We possess the power within us to support positive attitudes, right-thinking, good deeds and every kind of helpful or beneficial behavior in people around us. And in so doing, we ourselves are always beneficiaries, becoming ever more the kind of person we see and acknowledge in others.

We do not provide encouragement and support when we give thanks to God. But is our giving thanks appreciated? If we think of our own responses to

honest expressions of gratitude from others, our first thoughts are not about how good we are, but about the genuine care that someone exhibits towards us, however momentary and small a particular incident might be. We appreciate being appreciated. God is Love, and when we give thanks to God, we enter more deeply and more fully into Love, which is exactly what God wants for us.

Giving thanks is one of the primary ways we demonstrate that we are in the image and likeness of God.