

LIVING GRATITUDE



“Truly, we have received much, so many graces, so many blessings...

Perhaps we need to ask ourselves: are we good at counting our blessings?”

(Pope Francis, September 2015)

Our society is so fast to ask for things. In terms of material possessions, we want the best and latest model of everything. Even when it comes to prayer, we are so quick to turn to God and ask Him to fix things in our way and in our time. Often we miss the opportunity to simply be grateful. Showing gratitude is a pure response to the presence of God in my life, conscious that everything I am and have isn't because of me. It's because of God.

Aware that everything we have is a gift, we can never be grateful enough for all that we have received. When we think about our own lives, we are surrounded with so much, however we run the risk of being so complacent. We get caught up with trivial things and forget to be grateful for all that we have. The invitation of Pope Francis to count our blessings might seem like a simplistic task. Yet if we took the time to sit with a pen and paper and write down all the things we have to be grateful for, this list might surprise us.

The gift of life, a roof over our heads, the gift of freedom to express myself...the list is endless. Being grateful has a way of opening our hearts and minds to the goodness that surrounds us. In the midst of this I often question myself if I do enough to express gratitude to God for all His blessings. I sing many beautiful thanksgiving songs in mass, but do I really live the words I sing? Is my life a song of gratitude for all God has blessed me with?

In our service with the Society we are often dealing with those who are materially impoverished. To a certain extent, they rely on us for providing something to assist them with their basic needs. Those who suffer uncertainty and insecurity are often so grateful just to have a chance at a new beginning. Yet the challenge for those of us who have enough to sustain ourselves is to still have hearts open to gratitude. Are we grateful for opportunities given? Are we grateful for the chance to serve others? Are we grateful for our families and friends and all those we have in our lives who love us?



**ALWAYS BE GRATEFUL
EVERY DAY.**

As well as needing to grow in gratitude for the blessings we receive, it's far more difficult to be grateful for the challenges we face in life. It's tough to give thanks for difficulties that we encounter or things that don't go our way. Yet it is often the greatest challenges that lead to the greatest growth. How we come through moments of hardship shapes us into the people we are.

As we continue our journey of faith, let us strive to be grateful for the unconditional love of God, and for the moments that shape our character. Let us pray for grateful hearts, that our lives might become songs of gratitude for all that God continues to do for us. And let us be open to what we can learn from the simplicity and hope of those on the margins of society. Perhaps if everyone was slightly more grateful, our world would be a brighter place.

Questions for Reflection:

- 1. How often do you take a moment to stop in life just to be grateful for all that you have received?**
- 2. Call to mind an experience of someone being really grateful for something you have done for them in your service with the St Vincent de Paul Society.**
- 3. Why do you think that gratitude is such an important value for life?**

*nothing
but
gratitude!*

