



# *Gratitude*

*Reflections and Prayers  
for the  
Seasons of Life*

*Ecclesiastes 3: 1-8*

## **INTRODUCTION**

**“For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;”**

**Ecclesiastes 3:1 and 2- New Revised Standard Version (Catholic Edition)**

**The Book of Ecclesiastes in verse 11:8 further states, “Be grateful for every year.”**

**Do you realize that a year consists of 525, 600 minutes? A half a million minutes may seem like a long time. However, these six numbers represent a relatively short amount of time in God’s infinite universe.**

**Gratitude for the Seasons of Life is a collection of reflections and prayers to challenge you to answer the following questions about the 525, 600 minutes you are given as an act of gratitude from or to God each year:**

- 1. What does “gratitude” mean to you?**
- 2. In what ways do you express your “gratitude” to God, others, and yourself on a daily basis?**

*Gratitude*  
*for the Season of* **Tranquility**



A Snow Blanket on a trail in Southern West Virginia.

## **Opening Reflection 1**

**“I would maintain that thanks are the highest form of thought;  
and that gratitude is happiness doubled by wonder”  
(Gilbert K. Chesterton)**

### **Reflection**

As the colors of our logo depict, WVIS seeks to minister to people throughout all seasons of life. This volume of reflections ponders life's seasons using tranquility of winter, renewal of spring, growth of summer and harvest of fall. These movements assist our development of an attitude of gratitude which supports a healthy spiritual growth process. Gratitude is a feeling and invites us to appreciate all the unique aspects of our life. “In all things, give thanks.”- (1 Thessalonians 5: 16). Not so easy in the hiddenness of winter darkness or when the overgrowth of summer threatens harvest.

What is our call to wonder, gratitude and appreciation?

### **Call to Action**

Stop. Use your senses to absorb all that you can see, feel, hear, taste, touch, smell...savor today and then say ‘thank you’ to one person in your life who supports you in your current life season.

**Sister Carole A. Riley, CDP, Ph.D.**  
**WVIS Executive Director**  
**Charleston, WV**

# **TRANQUILITY**

## **Reflection 2**

**“This is the day the Lord has made;  
let us be glad and rejoice in it.”-Psalm 118:24**

### **Reflection**

Each day when I awake, I try to smile and thank God for the many blessings I have received in life. It sets my day to look for the positive that exists all around me. I even try to smile in the mirror and praise God for the blessing of awakening to another day.

When we look out at our life, we can either focus on what has gone wrong or what has been a blessing. All in time becomes a blessing, even if not seen in the moment. Perspective in looking back even shows us, often, that those challenges have often been gifts of grace. Focusing on the good helps me be peaceful and appreciative of living in the moment, the now God has placed before me.

### **Call to Action**

Today I will look for the beauty, peace, and with which God has blessed me. I will be present to the moment, just today, just now and be grateful.

Intentionally notice and thank God for the gifts of beauty, relationship and love present in my life today.

**Sister Ritamary Schulz, ASCJ  
Spiritual Director  
Hamden, CT**

## **TRANQUILITY**

### **Reflection 3**

**“No one is useless in this world who lightens the burdens of another.”-Charles Dickens**

#### **Reflection**

One winter during a terrible snow and ice storm with power transformers blowing up like artillery shells, we lost electricity, and our house grew cold and dark for a week. The roads were impassable, and we were confined, unable to get out. Yet somehow we endured: those brave electric linemen were out in the worst of winter restoring light and heat, a neighbor plowed out our driveway, and another neighbor fetched us in his four-wheel drive to take us for supplies.

We know the love of God through other people who help one another and through the abundance of the world--even within the awesome power of winter storms.

#### **Call to Action**

Remember people who have helped you in many ways: during storms, after emergencies, during illness, during loss... Hold each person gratefully in your heart.

**Christina St Clair**

**[www.loyaltyamongwomen.com](http://www.loyaltyamongwomen.com)**

**Pastor/writer**

**Ashland, KY**



# **TRANQUILITY**

## **Reflection 4**

**Suppose we did our work  
like the snow, quietly, quietly.  
leaving nothing out.  
—Wendell Berry, Leavings p.1**

**May we all grow in grace and peace, and not neglect the silence that is printed in the center of our being. It will not fail us. It is more than silence. Jesus spoke of the spring of living water, you remember.**

**—Thomas Merton, A Book of Hours, p.60**

### **Reflection**

It is winter and all around me is covered with yesterday's blanket of snow. A dry wind rustles the treetops, then stills, and I become aware of astounding quiet. In sharp relief with the jabbering voices within, the landscape beckons me to silence. A quickening wind rustles through my being and whispers, "Be still, and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10). I exhale. I listen. I am thankful. Quietly, quietly, I begin today's work. It is more than silence.

### **Call to Action**

Listen carefully to what is around you right now. Listen carefully to what is inside you right now. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak to you in what *is*. Tell God for what you are grateful. Then listen.

**Meredith Witten, BS, MATS  
WVIS Spiritual Direction Intern  
Durham, NC**

# **TRANQUILITY**

## **Reflection 5**

**“If the only prayer you ever say in your entire life is thank you,  
that would be enough.”  
~ Meister Eckhart**

### **Reflection**

Each day, the human heart wrestles with emotions and the waves of feeling that invade us as we go through the daily work of our lives. From the car that won't start on a cold morning, to the child that can't decide what they would like to eat, to the cancer diagnosis, to the endless lists of things that just seem to not get finished by the time the sun goes down, the human heart is restless until it rests in the tender embrace of our God of amazing grace. In the midst of the chaos, God's love invites us to move from the chaos to choose gratitude and that gratitude can lead us to a more tranquil and peaceful place; closer to the heart of God. Perhaps when the world offers us the opportunity to complain and shake our fists at the heavens, we can choose, like Meister Eckhart, thank you....

### **Call to Action**

Today repeat the prayer of Meister Eckhart as you encounter challenges and blessings... Thank you.

**Dr. Thomas Octave**  
**Associate Professor, Saint Vincent College**  
**Associate Spiritual Director**  
**Latrobe, PA**



# **TRANQUILITY**

## **Reflection 6**

### **Reflection**

Imagine a cold wintery day, and the ground outside with a fresh coating of newly fallen snow, the sun glistening off the frozen particles of snow. A calm day, tranquil in nature, peaceful, serene. A time to appreciate God in all of this splendor.

Tranquility is when I am wholly with God, peaceful and serene.

In unsettled times, I turn to the “Serenity Prayer”. That’s when I let God carry the burdens of the day for me.

### **Call to Action**

In unsettled times, pray this prayer:

#### **The Serenity Prayer**

“God grant me the serenity  
To accept the things I cannot change;  
Courage to change the things I can;  
And wisdom to know the difference.

Living one day at a time;  
Enjoying one moment at a time;  
Accepting hardships as the pathway to peace;  
Taking, as He did, this sinful world  
As it is, not as I would have it;  
Trusting that He will make all things right  
If I surrender to His Will;  
So that I may be reasonably happy in this life  
And supremely happy with Him  
Forever and ever in the next.  
Amen.”-Reinhold Niebuhr

**Deacon Tom Soper**  
**Associate Spiritual Director Intern**  
**Toledo, OH**

# **TRANQUILITY**

## **Reflection 7**

**“Accepting hardship as a pathway to peace...”**

**“...Taking, as he did, this sinful world as it is,  
not as I would like it.”**

**-from the Serenity Prayer, Long Version**

### **Reflection**

- It is fairly easy to recognize good things occurring in your life, and very easy to be grateful for them.
- It is very easy to recognize uncomfortable situations and unwanted things in our life, and fairly easy to resent them.
- It is very hard to recognize hardship as a gift from God. Hardships are opportunities to grow spiritually. Hardships are potential learning experiences, which may enable us to help others later in life.

The challenge is to see that God always answers all of our prayers; we just don't like to hear the answer all of the time. We don't always get the answer we want.

### **Call to Action**

Pray for the Grace to have gratitude for hardships.

**Patrick Riley  
Pittsburgh, PA**

# **TRANQUILITY**

## **Reflection 8**

### **Reflection**

In Thessalonians 5:16,18, we are taught “In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus.” An “attitude of gratitude” goes a long way toward living a good life, and to say “thanks” is a great way to inspire tranquility.

As a music teacher in the autumn season of life, I am grateful to have the opportunity to influence students in the spring season of their lives by encouraging them to be grateful that in the USA we have freedom of religion, the right to vote, vast natural boundaries on the east and west and friendly neighbors to the north and south. When students explore great music that was composed under difficult conditions, we appreciate how fortunate we are to have reliable drinking water, electricity, and sophisticated medical treatments. Thank you WVIS for hosting these reflections and helping us to be grateful for our everyday blessings.

### **Call to Action**

Thank you, God, for routine blessings that we take for granted and help us find ways to help others receive those blessings.

**Edward Kocher, Ph.D., Professor**  
**Duquesne University of the Holy Spirit**  
**Pittsburgh, PA**

*Gratitude*  
*for the Season of* **Renewal.**



Kanawha River in the hills of West Virginia

## **RENEWAL**

### **Reflection 9**

**For as the soil makes the *sprout* come up and a garden causes seeds to *grow*, so the Sovereign Lord will make righteousness and *praise* spring up before all nations. Isaiah 61:11**

### **Reflection**

Dear God, Thank you for the change of seasons. As I leave behind a winter that wore out its welcome with me, I step into spring with a fresh heart, ready for nature to take its course – longer daylight, birds building their nests, fresh air, trees budding, flowers blooming, more outside time.

Spring is a time to prepare for celebration of the resurrection of Your Son at Easter. During the Lenten Season we are encouraged to pray, fast and give. To ‘grow’ in love, knowledge and appreciation of the sacrifice Jesus made for all. A time to celebrate the full meaning of the Easter Season.

I pray this season bring joy and light, peace and prosperity, and a spirit in full bloom. Amen. (Author Unknown – with edits)

### **Call to Action**

Spring offers a time for renewal.

- How will renewal sprout forth in you?
- How will renewal grow in you?
- How will you offer praise in this season of renewal?

**Margaret (Susie) Pace, M.ED., M.A.**  
**Co-editor, Gratitude Reflections and Prayers**  
**Princeton, WV**

## **RENEWAL**

### **Reflection 10**

**“Gratitude turns what we have into enough.”-Anonymous**

#### **Reflection**

I used to live in the wintry “Land of Not Enough” and played the freezing mind game “If Only”.

The grey mental darkness that resulted was filled with dissatisfaction, unfulfilled longing, and self-pity. I was attending a meeting in which an attendee was relating the story of her friend going through multiple life challenges and how she continued to find 5 things to be grateful for each day. I listened and was prompted to try it myself.

At the end of each day, I began to write 5 things for which I was grateful that day and to thank God. The thaw began. Changes began to occur almost at once. Since I knew, I would have to come up with 5 things by nightfall, I began looking for things throughout the day to put on the list.

Spring had arrived with evidence of life budding forth and gratitude opened my eyes to see. I looked for blessings and felt gratitude for the abundance of grace and God’s love I found in the blossoming of each day. I continue.

#### **Call to Action**

Write 5 gratitude’s this evening.

**Eileen Chwalibog**  
**WVIS Affiliate Spiritual Director**  
**Huntington, WV**

## **RENEWAL**

### **Reflection 11**

**How do I renew my spirit?  
“Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
and renew a right spirit within me.”  
Psalm 51:10 ESV.**

#### **Reflection**

As I age, I find myself looking more and more at nature, especially trees. They renew a right spirit within me. Trees change as the cycles of nature work on them. Growing in Spring and Summer, appearing to go dormant in the winter, but hard work continues in their root systems. Preparing for a new season of growth. Trees sway in gentle winds and powerful winds can change them dramatically. Sometimes trees must be trimmed to ensure healthy growth and trimming can leave visible scars but pruning helps trees grow. We are like trees.

We change during our lives, we grow, we go dormant, and we need pruning on a regular basis to ensure healthy growth.

#### **Call to Action**

Embrace with gratitude each season of life whether it be growing, dormancy, or pruning. Every season renews us for the next season of life.

**The Very Reverend Alan Kim Webster  
Priest, Spiritual Director Intern with WVIS  
Charleston, WV**



## **RENEWAL**

### **Reflection 12**

#### **Gratitude during the Times of Ingratitude**

##### **Reflection**

"For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, arrogant, ungrateful, unholy, without self-control, haters of good, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God." This quote from 2 Timothy 3:2-4 describes the last days.

John D. Rockefeller was asked "How much money does it take to make you grateful?" Rockefeller said, "Just a little more." We must learn to be grateful with what we have.

Discipline is being grateful for all that God has blessed us with. There are 327 million people in the USA

- More than seven thousand will not survive this week; "Be grateful that you are not one of them."
- More than 56 million American's live in poverty today. "Be grateful that you are not one of them."
- More than 5 billion people on earth cannot listen to the Gospel or read the Bible without religious persecution and even being put to death; "Be grateful that you are not one of them."

There is no stronger attitude than the Attitude of Gratitude. You can express your gratitude by giving thanks to God – everyday – for all you have been blessed with.

##### **Call to Action**

"I will bless the LORD at all times: His praise shall continually be in my mouth."- Psalms 34:1

**Bill Ellis**  
**Charleston, WV**

## **RENEWAL**

### **Reflection 13**

**“To begin a life of penance the penitent places himself in the situation of listening.”**

**“The term penance in Franciscanism is... understood as an intimate conversion of the heart to God, as a vital attitude, as a continuous state of being.”**

**“Francis met God in Silence.”  
~ Lino Temperini, TOR**

### **Reflection**

I’m convinced that if we were stilled enough, inside and out, we could hear the renewal happening from the roots-up before Spring emerges. God is remembering/re-membering us from the same merciful compassion that brought us into our ongoing state of being.

As we welcome the stages of transition, in nature, in the world and in our lives, we cultivate a life-giving gratitude. This gratitude pollinates our own cyclical flowering into the fruit of closer communion with the God that holds us, always, in the “womb-love” that brought us into being... even as we’re being birthed into new becoming.

### **Call to Action**

- Pray to God for the grace of interior silence.
- Hold the ear of your heart to the inner conversation of the Trinity for ten minutes.
- Ask God to allow the fruit of your prayer to emerge.

**Brother Steve Grieco, TOR**  
**Hollidaysburg, PA**

## **RENEWAL**

### **Reflection 14**

**"So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do,  
do it all for the glory of God."  
I Corinthians 10:31**

#### **Reflection**

Each day is an opportunity for us to start afresh, to make amends, to experience the goodness of God in our lives. We have the opportunity to reflect and restart our dedication to a healthy mind, body, and spirit for health. Scripture tells us that "God gives orders to the morning every day."- Job 38:12

We are told in Romans, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." Romans 12:2

#### **Call to Action**

A good reminder from an old adage, if you fall off a horse, get right back on it.

- Pray for your food
- Pray for the opportunity to serve someone else
- Pray for the opportunity to exercise.

**Clinton Shrewsbury, B.S. Dietetics**  
**C.O.P.E. Health Coach and Personal Trainer**  
**Scott Depot, WV**

## **RENEWAL**

### **Reflection 15**

**Create in me a clean heart, O God;  
and renew a right spirit within me.  
Psalm 51:10**

#### **Reflection**

Gratitude is a form of spiritual renewal that everyone should strive to practice daily. We are naturally drawn to people who demonstrate a renewed spirit. These people exhibit clarity, purity, piety, and purpose. Spiritual renewal helps us balance the stress of work and demanding life experiences by creating an awareness that God is a steady source of strength for us. We all bear burdens and responsibilities that can quickly deplete us. When we approach God with gratitude, God generously pours forth His peace and serenity through the Holy Spirit, a constant flow of rejuvenation to the mind, body, and spirit.

Prayers of thanksgiving are a form of gratitude in which we recognize and appreciate all the good things we received from God. According to St. Paul, “Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you” and “devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with thanksgiving.”

#### **Call to Action**

Share with God your concerns and burdens. Ask God to rejuvenate you and renew your spirit.

**Father Sebastian Devasya, Pastor, VF**  
**Sacred Heart Catholic Churches in Bluefield and Princeton, WV**

*Gratitude*  
*for the Season of* **Growth.**



**New River Gorge, WV**

## **GROWTH**

### **Reflection 16**

**Someday, Ordinary Time will no longer be so. Pray for it!**

#### **Reflection**

Our reflections can be seen to reflect and parallel the “Church Year,” that teaching tool which focuses on the life of Christ in His earthly ministry. Over and over again in the three-year lectionary cycles and through the seasons of our lives, we hear about that ministry. We expect to make that pilgrimage until the day we die, forgetting that there will be a day when Jesus comes to bring in God’s kingdom.

#### **Call to Action**

As we consider this reflection and the others with gratitude, as we hear and re-hear of Jesus and his interactions with his disciples, followers, and enemies, watch his continuing focus and direction: Jesus continually leads us to answer our question “What would Jesus do?”

With God’s help, prepare for your own face-to-face encounter. We fix Advent on our calendar as if we control it, but we do not. Pray to live Advent daily and for Jesus to return in God’s own good time.

**The Rev. Kent Higgins**  
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Charleston, WV

## **GROWTH**

### **Reflection 17**

#### **Enjoy Being...inspiring a grateful existence (Mission Statement)**

#### **Reflection**

These two words... had a powerful impact in the mourning process after the death of my son. Seeing these words on the door of his dorm room, shocked me into the importance of being grateful, even in the most painful of situations.

These two words... become a source of growth, to offer others an insight of exploration for the moment, situation, emotion, or existence. The realization that gratitude could change even the darkest moments quickly became a passion to share with others.

These two words...became the closing to letters, emails and greeting cards, inviting the recipient to feel appreciated, loved, talented, supported.

#### **Call to Action**

Write these two words, Enjoy Being..., on paper and reflect on the words to complete the phrase. Example: Enjoy Being...(grateful)

When sending an email, letter or greeting card, use Enjoy Being... and include an expression for that recipient, revealing your intention of gratitude for that individual.

**Mary Malamisura**

[mary@enjoybeing.com](mailto:mary@enjoybeing.com)

**Bluefield, WV**



## **GROWTH**

### **Reflection 18**

#### **Growing Throughout Our Faith Journey**

**“Nature in the summer season is full of bright colors,  
everything around is flourishing.  
The birds are singing,  
You can feel that the nature around you is shining.”**  
**[-https://seasonsyear.com/summer](https://seasonsyear.com/summer)**

#### **Reflection**

When we think of growth in the summer, we often think of nature and growing of the plants, the trees, and the animals.

Or sometimes we think of the growth of people we know, like our children, or adult family members, or our friends – current and past. Or we may think of our thoughts and views of life over time, from our childhood, our teen years, our early adulthood, mid adult years, or senior years.

But, how often do we think of how our spiritual life has grown? How our faith has grown over the years?

#### **Call to Action**

- Let’s take a few minutes and think about how we have grown in faith over the years.
- What was our faith like when we were a: young child, a teenager, an adult.
- Give thanks for where God has led you and how you might share your faith with others.

**Elaine Soper, Ph.D.**  
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**Director of the WVIS, Toledo Satellite**  
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**Toledo, OH**

## **GROWTH**

### **Reflection 19**

#### **Reflection**

Summer is a season alive with life, beauty, warmth and growth. As the days grow longer and warmer, new life is all around us. The earth is alive once again after a season of cold and darkness. All of nature and our own lives come to fullness.

Abundance describes the beauty and bounty of our land. The growth of summer gives us a feeling of new life, playfulness and leisure. There is a spirit of freedom in the summer days that call us to be free in the goodness and blessings of the Lord.

During the inner summer days of our lives, we sense and live in the spiritual freedom given us as a gift by our loving God. The summer of our inner life will not last forever. It gradually fades away into fall. We are left with a sense of fullness and overwhelming gratitude for all God has grown in our inner lives.

#### **Call to Action**

“Flowers appear on the earth; the season for singing has come...”  
How can I sing the praises of God in my everyday life?

**Sister Gale Pankowski, SCC, BCC**  
**Chaplain at Coopermen Barnabas Medical Center**  
**Livingston, NJ**

## **GROWTH**

### **Reflection 20**

**As he was entering a village, ten lepers met him ... saying “Jesus, Master! Have pity on us! And when he saw them, he said, “Go show yourselves to the priests.” ...And one of them, realizing he had been healed, returned, glorifying God in a loud voice ... Jesus said in reply, “Ten were cleansed, were they not? Where are the other nine? Has none returned to give thanks to God?”- Luke 17:12-18 (New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition)**

### **Reflection**

Jesus performed between 37-42 Miracles during His time on Earth according to Scripture scholars. Of all the miracles, Jesus performed, the parable of the curing of the 10 Lepers reminds us of how important it is to show and express our gratitude for the abundance of blessings we receive from God on a daily basis.

### **Call to Action**

Take ten minutes today to make a list of ten people, places, or events for which you are grateful. Say a prayer of gratitude to God for these people, places or events.

**Bob Harrison, Ph.D.**  
**Co-editor, Gratitude Reflections and Prayers**  
**Charleston, WV**

## **GROWTH**

### **Reflection 21**

**“Train up a child in the way he should go;  
even when he is old he will not depart from it.”  
Proverbs 22:6**

#### **Reflection**

Many “empty-nesters” celebrate being free birds! But for me, sentimental snapshots pass through my mind from the first flutter in my belly to the moment I held each child in my arms. Memories of their first steps, words, kindergarten, passing their learner’s permit, and walking cross the graduation stage still linger.

It has been a privilege to watch them grow, but I also realize I have grown alongside them. Through the different seasons of family life, they flourished in size, spirit, intellect, and independence, while I have evolved in patience, maturity, wisdom, and most of all – FAITH.

I pray I have loved them enough, taught them enough, encouraged them enough, and given them a firm foundation of faith. As I embrace this new season, it is with deep love and gratitude that I thank God for the gift of my family and entrust each child to His divine providence.

“Parents give their children roots and wings. Roots to know where home is, wings to fly away and exercise what's been taught them.”  
Jonas Salk

#### **Call to Action**

- 1) Where are you deeply rooted and how have you grown?
- 2) When did you take flight? What did you learn?

**Gina Boggess**  
**Sacred Heart Catholic Church**  
**Princeton, WV**

## **GROWTH**

### **Reflection 22**

**“We are truly on the way with Christ...if we live a life of Thanksgiving for all that God has already revealed and done... even if God wants to surprise us and lead us where we did not want to go...”**

**Bernard Häring, *Prayer: The Integration of Faith and Life*.**

### **Reflection**

How easy it is to be grateful when life is floating along as we lean back and relax on a wave in the ocean! The above quote with its inclusion of the not so pleasant can stop us in our tracks, like a wave that tosses us off our kilter.

God’s call for transformation calls us to wonder. Wonder where God is taking us...how will it challenge my growth? With prayer and humility, it is a realization of the need for transformation. In my own life trust in God’s merciful love, has brought joy and a grateful heart.

### **Call to Action**

The next time you are called to growth in your spiritual life, listen in wonder to what God is saying with prayer and humility. God may surprise you with His goodness and inspire your gratefulness!

**Sister Mary Irene Sorber, SCC**  
**Associate Spiritual Director with WVIS**  
**Charleston, WV**

*Gratitude*  
*for the Season of* Harvest.



**Green Bank National Observatory, WV**  
**“The National Quiet Zone”**

## **HARVEST**

### **Reflection 23**

#### **Reflection**

Thomas Merton writes:

“To be grateful is to recognize the Love of God in everything. Every breath we draw is a gift of His love, every moment of existence is a grace, for it brings with it immense grace.

Gratitude, therefore, takes nothing for granted, is never unresponsive, is constantly awakening to new wonder and to praise of the goodness of God.

For the grateful person knows that God is good not by hearsay but by experience. And that is what makes all the difference.”

#### **Call to Action**

At each meal, I pause and ask myself:

- 1) What am I grateful for up to this moment?
- 2) What am I ungrateful for up to this moment?
- 3) I ask Christ for what I need to change the ungrateful to grateful.

**Father Bill Petro, M. A.**  
**Associate Spiritual Director**  
[Frbpetro42@gmail.com](mailto:Frbpetro42@gmail.com)  
**Dunbar, WV**



## **HARVEST Reflection 24**

**“O give thanks unto the LORD, for he is good:  
for his mercy endureth forever” -Psalm 107:1**

### **Reflection**

#### **“My Personal Expression of Being Thankful”**

By Reverend Marykaye Jacquet

My heart is filled with gratitude for all things great and small  
For the crests and crevasses of the mountain peaks  
For the stone chilled water rushing over a waterfall.

For the fluttering of Butterfly wings lightly musing near a flower  
For the Elephant’s footprint trampling the ground  
For the Lions as they crouch down and scour.

For the trees swaying calmly, the dew softly on the ground.  
For the perky little Squirrel, eating acorns he’s found.

For each flower that opens, and each little birdie that sings.  
The pesky Gnats, the naughty Flies, even the Bumble Bee’s Stings,  
My heart is filled with gratitude that God’s abiding presence,  
and unfailing Love is freely given to you and me.  
From His Heavenly Kingdom from above.

### **Call to Action**

Dear God,

Help us to have grateful hearts as we reflect on, the beauty of all you  
have created and for allowing us to coexist among them.

**Reverend Marykaye Jacquet  
Arlington, TX**

## **HARVEST**

### **Reflection 25**

**“Gratitude is a path to our truth.”**  
**(A.A.’s Bill Wilson in “As Bill Sees it.”)**

#### **Reflection**

A bench in an autumn park setting can be a nice place for reflection of gratitude. Sun warmth peeking from the clouds magnifies city workers cutting grass, kids playing, friends walking, crickets and birds in chorus calling, and a blanket of autumn leaves - all metaphors for God’s graces surrounding us daily. We too often miss the power of this joy and its healing.

There’s sweet song in it all.

When we forget to be grateful, Thomas Merton’s wisdom can be helpful: “It is a glorious destiny to be a member of the human race.... God Himself glorified in becoming a member of the human race.” (Thomas Merton, “A Book of Hours,” Sunday - Day.)

Our truths reveal life’s gifts. They will relieve the gloom in the day

#### **Call to Action**

Try a park bench, autumn gratitude experience.

**Bob Sylvester, M.A.**  
**WVIS Spiritual Direction Associate**  
**Charleston, WV**

## **HARVEST**

### **Reflection 26**

**“All Good Gifts around us  
are sent from Heaven above...  
Oh Thank the Lord, Oh Thank the Lord,  
for all His Love...I really want to thank you Lord.”  
(Godspell 1971-Merrell Jackson & Steven Schwartz)**

### **Reflection**

Harvesting is a time of gathering the fruits of our labor. It is a time of reflecting on the effort we have put into our personal goals, or it could be a breakthrough in a situation where we find ourselves humbly aware of our powerlessness.

Often the universe offers us life lessons through our daily experiences, and, when we remain open to life's teachings, we are able to experience a harvest of bountiful blessings.

Giving thanks for a painstaking experience that produces invaluable insight or an improvement in our lives becomes a gift. God knows that all our harvesting includes both joys and pain. Good can come from pain as long as we remain open to the possibilities.

### **Call to Action**

What life lessons are part of your harvest? Make a gratitude list of 3 learnings which guide your life today. Be blessed.

**Sister Linda Hylla, CDP  
Licensed Clinical Social Worker  
Friend of WVIS  
Granite City, IL**

## **HARVEST**

### **Reflection 27**

**Neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything,  
but only God, who causes the growth.  
1 Corinthians 3.7**

#### **Reflection**

No matter where we live, we are bound to the cycles of Mother Earth in the sacred story of creation.

Beginning in seedtime Spring, we wait patiently and watch the quiet, but steady, germination of plants, which will give us life and nourishment: grasses, herbs, fruits and vegetables.

The marvel of spring is surpassed by the wonder and delight of autumn -- the harvest: diverse and abundant in color, aroma and taste.

We celebrate our thanks for the providence of God with an overflowing cornucopia, or “horn of plenty,” a symbol of abundance. This symbol is imbedded in our spirits from ancient times, and the reverence we feel for the earth and the provident care of God in providing abundantly for our needs remains unchanged.

Cornucopia -  
Overflowing abundance  
Shared in gratitude.

#### **Call to Action**

Consider the cornucopia of your life. What blessings fill it today?

How are you able to let those blessings flow out into your world?

**Sister Deborah Lockwood**  
**Franciscan Sister**  
**Redwood City, CA**

## **HARVEST**

### **Reflection 28**

#### **“More Than a Person’s Best Friend”**

#### **Reflection**

Dogs are more than a person’s best friends no matter in what stage of life people find themselves. Dogs demonstrate to us nine distinct, Spiritual traits that we must be constantly planting and harvesting within ourselves to be of greater service to others. These Spiritual traits are as follows:

(1) Perseverance; (2) Faithfulness and Trust; (3) A Childlike Essence; (4) A Sense of Family; (5) Companionship; (6) Safeguarding; (7) Unconditional Love; (8) Sensitivity; and (9) Being Divine Messengers.

#### **Call to Action**

A Novena consists of nine days of prayers. Why is a Novena nine days? One belief is that a novena represents the nine days Jesus spent in Mary’s womb. Another belief is that a Novena represented the nine days when the Apostles were in constant prayer from the Ascension to Pentecost.

For nine days, take one of each of the nine Spiritual traits listed above, and ask God to reveal to you ways you can incorporate these Spiritual traits in your dealings with the people you will encounter in your daily life.

**Laura Maddox**  
**Charleston, WV**

## **HARVEST**

### **Reflection 29**

#### **Pumpkin Seeds and the Gratitude Connection**

##### **Reflection**

Not only is the Pumpkin and its seeds the largest harvested fruit in the fall, but carving the Pumpkin is a special way to express gratitude to God. Carving a pumpkin was a sacred task performed by individuals or as a family as part of their Thanksgiving observance.

People would gather around a table and begin with a Prayer of Gratitude. Then, they would open the Pumpkin, and begin removing each seed. As a seed was removed, the person or persons would share what they were most grateful for during the year. This would continue until most of the seeds were removed.

##### **Call to Action**

The next time one carves a Pumpkin or encounters Pumpkin seeds, take some time to express gratitude to God for the blessings one has received.

**Bruce Neal**  
**West Virginia Reading Association Executive Director**  
**Charleston, WV**

## **HARVEST**

### **Reflection 30**

**“So, teach us to count our days so that we may gain a wise heart.”**  
**Psalms 90:12**

#### **Reflection**

When the Fall Season comes into our lives and we have reached the apogee of our professional careers, our spiritual lives take a decidedly different turn, as it did for the father in the Parable of the Prodigal Son.

He did not ask his lost son for a full accounting of his transgressions. He merely celebrated the fact that his son had been found again. We have the luxury of offering forgiveness, love and compassion for our families and friends, without any reservation.

As I learn to count my days, in the harvest season of my life, God, help me to be ever more grateful, to show more mercy and forgiveness to all people, so that I may gain a wise heart.

#### **Call to Action**

During this golden period of your life, how do you learn to forgive those people who do not even ask for it?

**Deacon J. Peter Minogue**  
**Saint Patrick Catholic Church,**  
**Hinton, WV**



*Gratitude*  
*for the Seasons of* **WVIS.**



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## **Closing Reflection 31**

**“In everything give thanks;  
for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”  
1 Thessalonians 5:18**

### **Reflection**

There are many of us who have had the opportunity to live in a part of the country in which we experience the richness of all four seasons. Each season ushers in an anticipation of what is to come, a certain “spirit” and invites participation in familiar customs associated with it. Each season offers a variety of sights, sounds, tastes, scents as well as the unique seasonal items which pass through our hands, like the precious holiday treasures we bring out each year!

It is common parlance to hear people say; “She is in the springtime of her youth”, or a pronouncement; “I am in the winter season of my life”. There is an innate recognition of how that season mirrors the present reality of one’s life. It is helpful to spend time asking what season best reflects where I am in my journey of life? What specifically is the tranquility, renewal, growth or harvest I am experiencing?

Some seasons bring extraordinary delight as well as weather related disasters. That relates to our personal lives as well. When the “going is good”, it is easier to have an attitude of gratitude. It is much more challenging to be still and search for the good in times of extreme personal turbulence. To adopt a posture of gratitude in all things, and in all seasons of life is a worthy grace to ask of God!

### **Call to Action**

Adopt a posture of gratitude in all things, and in all seasons of life!

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