

A Reflection on Gratitude

November 19, 2006

When I was a young adolescent, I hated to be away from my friends for an hour let alone a whole day that was to be set aside for family Thanksgiving time, when no calls or visits to friends was allowed. Now I would give anything to have just an hour with my family and truth be told, none of the friends I had back then have I seen for twenty years. When I was a kid at Thanksgiving, I hated to be put at the kid's table for the meal. Didn't you? In my family it was the makeshift table- a board on saw horses, a folding table, or two card tables set side by side, it was set with mismatch daily dishes, usually unbreakable, a plastic table cloth and usually set up in the "other room" far away from adult conversation and the alcohol toast. Now I would give anything to go back to that table and visit with my cousins and siblings many who have died or moved far away. When I was a young adult, I hated having to wash and wipe the after meal Thanksgiving dishes. Usually I was stuck with my grandmother or great aunt and they would chatter away with family gossip while I would seethe about being stuck with them. Today I would give a lot to be able to stand with them again and ask them about some of those family members and to hear the juicy gossip that floated around about them and their adventures or should I say misadventures.

I tell you this because gratitude is one of those concepts that we often times only realize in hind sight and too often it is when comparing to something or someone else. We can bemoan that we did not have a matching set of fancy china when there are many who have no dishes let alone china. We can bemoan that we did not the adult toast of champagne when for many even just one sip would set off another drunken episode that will result in a sense of brokenness and pain in the family. We can bemoan that the turkey or meal was not just right and forget that there are thousands

who will go hungry on the day that we stuff ourselves to bursting. We can bemoan that a lot of things did not go our way and forget that we have a multitude of blessings for which to be grateful. Gratitude is a state of mind and an action that we need to express. Gratitude begins with having a sense of benefits received, it is then followed by acknowledging the gifts, the benefits, the joy, the pleasures received with a heart and mind full of gratefulness and thankfulness. It comes to full fruitfulness by expressing that thankfulness. That is why this morning I asked you to jot down e some of the things you are grateful for? It seems fair that I begin with those things I am grateful for.

I am grateful for my health, this wonderful place to be in community that is labeled my job but is really my calling and passion. I am grateful for my family and a beautiful home and so many possessions that I should be embarrassed about but that I delight in. I am grateful for my friends and that I can give back to this community. I am grateful for the memories that I can rely on to sustain me when I am sad and missing those who have died. I am grateful to you and to life.

Now let's look at the things you wrote:

Colleen though not here wrote "I know I have so many things in my life to be thankful for and you are all certainly among those things." This was the note she wrote to express her gratitude to the hard working, dedicated RE Comm. Darri, Tina, Clare, Sharon, and all those parents and church members who have helped as the program has grown and changed.