

## Giving Thanks

*If the only prayer you ever say in your entire life is "thank you," it will be enough.*

*Meister Eckhart*

What are you grateful for? Take a moment right now to get a piece of paper and write down at least 10 things for which you'd like to give thanks. Now look at your list. (If you are trying to do this in your head or are promising yourself you'll do it later, I strongly recommend that you make the 2-minute time investment to write a list now. I guarantee that it will be worth your while.)

What do you notice about your list? It may include people, creatures, things, experiences and abilities. You may recognize that your perspective shifted as you wrote, from bigger to smaller things or from material to immaterial. There is no right or wrong result. What's important is to step back and ask yourself what you are grateful for and to give yourself time to answer.

How do you feel as you look at your list? Perhaps you are smiling or you feel lighter, as if a burden had been lifted from you. Maybe you feel more vibrant. In any case I'll bet that you feel better than you did before writing the list.

There is tremendous power in giving thanks and yet we seem to do it less and less. With the decline in regular religious practice, there are fewer rituals for giving thanks. The American Thanksgiving tradition originated with the Pilgrims who, with help from the Indians, had survived their first winter (nearly half of the original 104 people on the Mayflower had died) and managed to harvest a crop. They gathered together, inviting the Indians to share in the feast, to give thanks to God for their blessings. Giving thanks was the main point, not the feasting. I think we've lost touch with that. With our lives of luxury and abundance, we are in danger of forgetting how to be grateful. We seem always to want more, and to discount what we have.

Counting our blessings focuses our attention on what *is*, rather than what is not. Not only can we see that our glass is half full, but we become aware of the miracle of glass and glassmaking and water and that we have hands to hold the glass and minds to reflect on it. Gratitude on this level presupposes humility and the acknowledgement of a greater power. Through thanksgiving we can experience grace, the sensation of being divinely blessed. In its expansiveness we recognize our connectedness to all of creation and its wondrousness. What a gift!

Not only at Thanksgiving, but in your daily life, take some time to give thanks.