

Thanksgiving
2013

As we come together
this morning to celebrate our national Thanksgiving holiday,
our Jewish brothers and sisters throughout the world
are celebrating
the first day of Hanukkah.
While this is an unusual convergence of dates
and commemorations,
it is surprisingly appropriate,
as both Thanksgiving
and Hanukkah
are celebrations of religious freedom,
and the abundance we know through God's providence.
Significantly, both celebrations
are marked by the sharing of food
around a common table.

It would seem
that the only fitting response to these gifts
of freedom and abundance,
is the one offered by the Samaritan of today's gospel.
Healed of leprosy,
he experienced freedom.
returned to the One who gave him abundant new life
and poured out his gratitude.

Gratitude springs from an insight,
a recognition,
that something good has happened.
and that something good was not earned,
It was not merited,
It was not deserved,
instead, it was freely given.

The Gospel claims that only one in ten,
responded to the gift of healing with thanks.
So, it would seem that gratitude is not innate,
it needs to be learned,
and it needs to be cultivated.

But, a major obstacle in our time to cultivating gratitude
is a culture that bombards us with the message
that we don't have enough,
and so we think we need more,

a culture that purports that we are not good enough,
not smart enough,
not attractive enough,
not well enough,
not strong enough.

Gratitude is only possible
when we realize that we do have enough
that we are enough.
Who we are
and what we have is enough for today's needs.
And so, this moment,
this day,
is the right time for gratitude.
Now is the only time we have.

Spiritual master,
Brother David Steidl-Rast,
says it this way:
"You think this is just another day in your life.
It's not just another day;
it's the one-day that is given to you today.
It's given to you; it's a gift.
It's the only gift that you have right now,
and the only appropriate response is gratefulness"

This recognition of the present moment
as all,
as everything,
as gift,
is also a recognition of the abundance provided by our provident God.
Abundance means not quantifying,
not counting how much is enough,
whether enough food
or enough time
or enough money,
but just beginning to see what is
as enough for now
and being able to say thank you
right now,
for what is, right now.
It means not rushing off to the next thing,
as the nine did,
but stopping to take note of the reality of this moment.

So, giving thanks—

recognizing our abundance—
grounds us in the present moment,
not determined by the past
or straining toward the future.
The recognition of our abundance
calls us to loosen our grasp,
to hold all lightly.

It calls us to let go of our stored up regrets about yesterday.
It calls us to let go of our amped up fears about tomorrow.
It invites us to cease from reaching,
from straining forward to the next time,
the better way,
the improved,
the bigger,
the faster,
the upgraded, whatever. (A Word in Time By Anne Howard - October 7th, 2013,
beatitudesociety.org)

On this day,
as we join with our brothers and sisters
throughout the world,
commemorating the gifts of religious freedom
and the abundance of God's providence,
spread before us on our dining tables
and the altar of this Eucharist,
we give thanks,
confident that we are enough.
that we have enough,
even more than enough.

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