

## Session 2

### Exploring a Life of Discipleship - A Foundation of Gratitude

# GRATEFUL HEARTS-GENEREROUS SPIRITS

Such generosity flows from hearts grateful to God for his generosity in creating and saving us.

*(United States Catholic Catechism for Adults, p. 455)*

## GATHERING: (15 minutes)

### Welcome and Greeting

Group Members Share:

- One word that describes me today is...
- What did I commit to in Session 1?
- How did I follow through with my commitment?

## PRAYING: (15 minutes)

### Songs

Traditional songs to sing/play or select a contemporary personal favorite

- Praise to the Lord - Lohye Den Herren
- Holy God We Praise Thy Name - Grosser Gott

YouTube selections:

- Thank You Lord—Don Moen  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K44trVhtZX4>
- Give Thanks—Don Moen  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bk\\_7wUR2Wdg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bk_7wUR2Wdg)

## Quotation for Silent Reflection

Consider a word or phrase for possible sharing

To be grateful is to recognize the love of God in everything God has given us-and God has given us everything. Every breath we draw is a gift of God's love, every moment of existence is a grace...Gratitude therefore takes nothing for granted, is never unresponsive, is constantly awakening to new wonder and to praise for 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.

*Thomas Merton,*

*(Twentieth Century Trappist Monk)*

## Scripture for Inspiration

Luke 17:11-19

Question for Group Reflection

- Words or verses that spoke to me are?



## Prayer Conclusion (Together)

Good and gracious God, we are your children and the beneficiaries of your great love and generosity. We want to be imitators of your Son Jesus. Lead us to begin our personal conversion to a life of stewardship by truly understanding all you have given us and all that you have done for us through Jesus. Help us to be the ones who gratefully fall to our knees in front of the Lord each day. We ask this with hope and gratitude in the name of Jesus our brother and Savior.  
Amen.

Good stewards live with joy and gratitude for the blessings they have received-including those that have multiplied through diligence and hard work.

*(Stewardship: A Disciple's Response, United States Catholic Conference of Bishops)*

**CONSIDER THIS:** (38 minutes - If participants have not read content prior to gathering, please take a moment to read aloud, rotating willing members.)

## Jesus, His World and Gratitude

“It is good to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praise to your name, Most High” (Ps 92:2).

The thankful voices of the Hebrew Psalmists flowed easily into Jesus’ world. The Holy Spirit embraced most noticeably those who were intimately involved in his birth. Mary, Jesus’ mother, offered her own psalm of overwhelming gratitude about her pregnancy during her encounter with Elizabeth: “My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my savior” (Lk 1:68). Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, shares his gladness in a savior from the house of David: “Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, for he has visited and brought redemption to his people” (Lk 1:46-47). The shepherds, after encountering Jesus in the manger proclaimed: “Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen” (Lk 2:20). The Prophetess Anna, at the presentation of Jesus, expresses her delight in the realization of who Jesus truly is: “she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were awaiting the redemption of Jerusalem” (Lk 2:38). There was no doubt, when people could clearly see the presence of God, their fear left them and their hearts were filled with gratitude and joy. In essence, like many of the disciples to come, they were transformed.

During his public ministry, the Gospels disclose not only Jesus’ intimate relationship with his Father but also his gratitude for all that was being accomplished. As he prepares to feed the four thousand, Jesus “took the seven loaves and the fish, gave thanks...” (Mt 15:36). On another occasion, Jesus thankfully praises God for allowing the pure of heart to “see” him. He states: “I give praise to you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth for although you have hidden these things from the learned, you have revealed them to the childlike” (Mt 11:25). In another profound instance, a saddened Jesus raises his dear friend Lazarus from the dead and lifts his eyes and says: “Father, I thank you for hearing me” (Jn 11: 41).

Jesus, our model of “holiness,” acknowledged the presence of his Father in his life, demonstrated trust in doing his will, and did both with profound gratitude. As Jesus’ disciples heard his words and witnessed his actions, they were being formed in a way that would help them to carry on the message of the Psalmists as they spread the Good News. In this generation, however, the joy and gratitude will be for a promised Savior who *has* redeemed us. Christ has died! Christ has risen! Christ will come again!



### Quotation for Reflection

“Gratitude...goes beyond the “mine” and “thine” and claims the truth that all of life is a pure gift. In the past I always thought of gratitude as a spontaneous response to the awareness of gifts received, but now I realize that gratitude can also be lived as discipline. The discipline of gratitude is the explicit effort to acknowledge that all I am and have is given to me as a gift of love, a gift to be celebrated with joy.”

*Henri J. M. Nouwen  
(Priest and Spiritual Guide)*

“Let nothing trouble you/Let nothing frighten you/Everything passes/God never changes/Patience/Obtains all/Whoever has God/Wants for nothing/God alone is enough.”

*(St. Teresa of Avila quoted in the Catechism of the Catholic Church no, 227)*

# Authentic Gratitude - True Joy - Unending Generosity

Following the ascension of Jesus, his followers “did him homage and then returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and they were continually in the temple praising God” (Lk 24:52-53). The early disciples, through fearless trust and unyielding acceptance, (often in very difficult circumstances) understood all that God had given and were able to express their jubilant appreciation. After Pentecost, they unceasingly shared their joy that sprang from grateful hearts and were able to evangelize and build the early Christian community. They became great stewards of all that was given to them because they acted out of authentic gratitude. Paul was especially consistent in framing many letters in gratitude. Consider the sampling below:

- “What thanksgiving, then can we render to God for you for all the joy we feel on your account before our God?” (1Thes 3:9).
- “...but be filled with the Spirit” addressing one another [in] psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and playing to the Lord in your hearts, giving thanks always and for everything in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father” (Eph 5:19-20).

Paul’s conversion to Christ blessed him with an understanding that all good things come from God and also with a “grateful energy” that we are called to imitate.

Today, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* tells us that having faith in God “means living in thanksgiving” (CCC, no 224). Similarly, the U.S. Catechism for Adults in discussing the Sunday Eucharist, states “Every human person, having been created by God, owes him worship and thanksgiving for what the Lord has done and what he continues to do” (U.S. Catholic Catechism for Adults, p. 363). Pope Francis states: *The salvation which God offers us is the work of his mercy. No human efforts, however good they may be, can enable us to merit so great a gift. God by his sheer grace, draws us to himself and makes us one with him* (EG 112).

The message for us today is if we are to be generous stewards of our relationship with God in prayer, of our talents in service and of our treasure in sharing, we need to be grateful for the *lasting* gifts that God has given us. Living in a culture that often places a value on how happy we should be by our material possessions and our accomplishments, makes it difficult to trust in God and experience authentic gratitude. Many times we are chasing things which lead to envy or greed. True gratefulness brings true joy and out of that joy a generosity flows that assists us in living in imitation of the “Master.”

## Questions for Reflection:

**What are the things that you are most grateful for in your life? \* What has been the source of your most joyful moments? \* What has been your action or reaction in those moments? \* How are people today like the Ten Lepers in scripture? \* Why is it difficult to place our lives in God’s hands? \* What role do you think trust plays in your effort to be a good steward of prayer, service and sharing? \* What might be some ways or opportunities for you to become a more grateful, joyful person?**

## Notes:

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“Sanctity has to do with gratitude. To be a saint is to be fueled by gratitude, nothing more and nothing less.”  
(Fr. Ronald Rolheiser in *The Holy Longing*)

## FROM THE HEART OF POPE FRANCIS:

- In union with Jesus, we seek what he seeks and we love what her loves, In the end, what we are seeking is the glory of the Father; we live and act “for the praise of his glorious grace” (*Eph1:6*) (*EG 267*)
- May we learn to say “thank you” to God and to one another. We teach children to do it, and then we forget to do it ourselves! (*tweeted March 20, 2014*)
- For if we have received the love which restores meaning to our lives, how can we fail to share that love with others. (*EG 8*)
- The best incentive for sharing the Gospel comes from contemplating it with love, lingering over its pages and reading it with the heart. If we approach it in this way, its beauty will amaze and constantly excite us. (*EG 264*)



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## LIVING LIKE JESUS: (21 minutes)

### Take Action

Consider how your prayer, reflection and sharing in Session 2 might have inspired you to step out in faith this week. Share ideas that reflect your personal situation or consider one of the simple ideas below.

- Ponder people in your life who you believe live a life of gratitude. Seek their wisdom.
- Prayerfully begin and end each day with a grateful heart.
- Use the *Additional Scripture Passages* found below for reflection.
- Create family gratitude notes and make an effort to send several out each week.
- Share with a family member, colleague or friend one thing you are grateful for each day.
- Begin a yearly gratitude calendar. Using a blank calendar, write several items in the squares at the end of the day. Take a moment to contact people to whom you are grateful.
- Reflect upon your personal history and make a list of things/people you are truly grateful for.
- As a household, create a gratitude collage or family tagline.
- Invite friends and family over for an “off-season” Thanksgiving dinner.

## Commitment:

- In light of this, what commitment will I make for the week(s) ahead?

## Additional Scripture Passages:

Psalms 50:23	Psalms 106:1-2	Psalms 107:1
Psalms 30:12-13	Psalms 100:1-5	Psalms 92:1-2
Psalms 118: 1-24	Hebrews 12:28	1Timothy 4:4-5
Ephesians 5:19-20	2Corinthians 9:11-15	
Colossians 3:17	Ephesians 1:16	

## Wrap Up: (1 minute)

Date for Session 3 \_\_\_\_\_

## Closing Prayer (Together)

Father, we thank you for this time together to share our faith and friendship. Place deep within our hearts the spirit of gratitude, one that will take our breath away whenever we consider how blessed we are. Encourage us and help us to support each other in our journey to live out our gratefulness in generosity and love as we strive to imitate our Lord and Savior. Amen.

The optimist says, the cup is half full. The pessimist says, the cup is half empty. The child of God says; My cup runneth over. *Anonymous*

