

Gratefulness



“The humility of the Spirit living within us leads to joy which is the true expression of gratefulness. Without gratefulness happiness is not possible.” - Deacon Reggie Bollich

There is something very personal, very central to our concerns everywhere in the world, in the mainstream of everything we do. Whatever we do, whatever we put up with, all of us want to be happy. In this we are all together. Can we possibly imagine that our happiness differs from one another? We have a lot in common. We all want to be happy.

The topic is ‘**Gratefulness**’ and the connection between happiness and gratefulness. One might say, when you are happy you are grateful, but think again. Is it really the happy people that are grateful? We all know a number of people who have everything it would take to be happy and they are not happy because they want something else or they want more of the same.

We all know people who have lots of misfortune, misfortune that we ourselves would not want to have and they are deeply happy. They radiate happiness. Why, because they are grateful.

It is not happiness that makes us grateful. It is gratefulness that makes us happy. Now, what do we mean by gratefulness. How does it work? I appeal to your own experience. We all know from experience how it goes. We experience something that is valuable to us, something that is given to us that is valuable to us and it is really given. These two things have to come together. It has to be something valuable and it has to be a real gift; you haven’t bought it, you haven’t earned it, you haven’t traded it in, you haven’t worked for it. It has been given to you. And when these two things come together that is really valuable to me I realize it is freely given, then gratefulness spontaneously rises in my heart, happiness spontaneously rises in my heart. That’s how gratefulness happens. Now the key to all this is that we can not only experience this once in a while. We cannot only have grateful experiences, we can be people who live gratefully, grateful living, that is the thing, and how can we live gratefully?, by experiencing by becoming aware that every moment is a given moment, as we say it is a gift, you have not earned it, you have not bought it, you have no way of assuring there will be another moment given to you and yet that is the most valuable thing that can ever be given to us, this moment with all the opportunity that it contains. If we did not have this present moment we would not have any opportunity to do anything or to experience anything, This moment is a gift, it is a given moment as we say. Now we say the gift within the gift is really the opportunity. What you are really grateful for is the opportunity, not the thing that is given to you because if you did not have the opportunity to enjoy to do something with it you would not be grateful for it.

Opportunity is the gift within every gift and we have this saying, “opportunity knocks only once”. Well think again. Every moment is a new gift, over and over again, and if you missed the opportunity at this moment another moment is given to us, and another moment, and another moment ... until we seize the opportunity. We can avail ourselves to this opportunity or we can miss it. And if we avail ourselves of the opportunity it is the key to happiness. We hold the master key to happiness in our own hands moment by moment and we can be grateful for this gift. But it does not mean we can be grateful for everything. We cannot be grateful for violence, for war, for oppression, for unfaithfulness, for

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bereavement, or exploitation. On the personal level we cannot be grateful for the loss of a friend, for unfaithfulness, for bereavement. But I did not say we can be grateful for everything, I said we can be grateful in every given moment for the opportunity and even when we are confronted with something that is terribly difficult we can rise to this occasion and respond to the opportunity that is given us. It is not as it might seem. Actually when you look at it and experience it you find that most of the time what is given to us is the opportunity to enjoy. We only miss it because we are rushing through life and we are not stopping to see the opportunity. But once in a while something very difficult is given to us and when this difficult thing occurs to us it is a challenge to rise to that opportunity and we can rise to it by learning something which is sometimes painful, learning patience for instance we have been told that the road to peace is not a sprint but a marathon that takes patience and that's difficult. Maybe to stand up for your opinion, to stand up for your conviction, that's an opportunity that is given to us. To learn, to suffer, to stand up, all these opportunities are given to us, but they are opportunities and those who avail themselves of those opportunities are the ones that we admire that make something out of life. And those who fail get another opportunity. We always get another opportunity. That is the wonderful richness of life.

So how can we find a method that will harness this, how can each one of us find a method for living gratefully for not just once in a while to being grateful but moment by moment to be grateful. It is a very simple method that we learned when we were children; STOP, LOOK, GO. That's all.

But how often do we STOP. We rush through life. We don't STOP. We miss the opportunity because we do not STOP. We have to STOP, we have to get quiet, we have to build a stop sign into our life. When we finally STOP the next thing we have to do is LOOK. We open our eyes, open our ears, open our nose, open our senses for this wonderful richness that is given to us. That is what life is all about, to enjoy what is given to us. Then we can open our hearts to the opportunity to help others, to make others happy because nothing makes us more happy when all of us are happy. And when we are open our hearts to the opportunities, the opportunities invite us to "do something" and that is when we "GO" to "do something".

We can do is whatever life offers us at the present moment. Mostly it's the opportunity to enjoy. Sometimes it is more difficult but whatever it is if we take the opportunity GO with it, we are creative, we are creative people and that little STOP/LOOK/GO is a potent work that can revolutionize the world because the present moment is at the middle of change of consciousness. A wave of gratefulness is becoming important and it can change our world.

If you are grateful you are not fearful, if you are not fearful you are not violent. If you are grateful you operate out of a sense of enough and not out of a sense of scarcity, you are willing to share. If you are grateful you are enjoying the differences between people, the diversity of people, and you are respectful to everybody. That can change the power pyramid under which we live. It does not make for equality but it makes for equal respect and that is the important thing.

Today is not just another day. It is the one day given to you – today. It is the only gift we have right now.

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If we learn to respond that it is the very first day of our life or the very last one, then you will have spent this day very well. Today, when we LOOK into the face of another person what do we see. Behind every face there is an incredible story. It is not only the story of the person we see behind the face, but it is also the story of that person's past, their ancestors, their struggles, what they endure. Life from so many generations and from so many places, life from distant places all over the world, flows together and meets you here, like life giving waters if only you open your heart and drink of its diversity. Open your heart to that incredible gift that civilization gives to us. Flip a switch and there is electric light. Turn a faucet and there is warm or cold water, and drinkable water, a gift that millions in the world never experience. I wish you to open your heart to all the blessings and let them flow through you for others to see. Let everyone that you meet on this day be blessed by you. Just by your presence let the gratefulness overflow into blessing one another. Then it will really be a good day.

“The future world will be a network, not a pyramid. It is not the power revolution that turns the pyramid upside down, it is the networking in smaller groups who interact with one another and that makes for a grateful world. A grateful world is a world of grateful people. A grateful people are a joyful people and makes for a joyful world.” - Benedictine Brother David Steindl-Rast