

## Message from the Parish Nurses

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### BENEFITS of GRATITUDE

Ever wish there were a magic pill you could take to improve your mood, increase your kindness, boost your energy level, and help you sleep better. Unfortunately, no such pill exists. The secret? A daily gratitude practice. It's often easy to practice gratitude when you're on the receiving end of life's greater fortunes. However, it can be trickier to feel grateful during times of hardship or the doldrums of everyday living. Studies have shown that making a simple shift in attitude can better color your worldview, leading to better mental, emotional, and physical well-being.

### GRATITUDE

The word gratitude is derived from the Latin word, *gratia*, which means grace, graciousness, or gratefulness (depending on the context). In some way's gratitude encompasses all of these meanings. Gratitude is the appreciation of what is valuable and meaningful to oneself. With gratitude, we acknowledge the goodness in our lives.

### BENEFITS of GRATITUDE

- **Gratitude improves your mental well-being:** One of the most impactful benefits of regularly practicing gratitude is that it provides an outlet to purge negative thoughts and emotions; such as, envy, resentment, frustration, and regrets. Studies have shown that recognizing your blessings – especially during times of difficulty and strife – can lower rates of post-traumatic stress and help you feel more resilient. That means that even during stressful times, you're better able to cope. Obviously, practicing gratitude alone can't overcome clinical mental illness, but living a grateful lifestyle has lasting impacts on your brain and sense of happiness.
- **Gratitude improves physical health:** Multiple studies have shown that living more appreciatively can also boost your physical health. Grateful people experience fewer aches and pains and not surprisingly, they are also more likely to take care of their health. They exercise more and are more likely to get regular check-ups, which is likely to contribute to further longevity. People who are more thankful tend to sleep better. Instead of lying awake, going over negative thoughts, focusing on blessings soothes the nervous system. That helps you fall asleep more quickly, sleep

better, and sleep for longer.

- **Gratitude opens the door to more relationships:** Saying "thank you" not only constitutes good manners, but showing appreciation can help you win new friends. So, whether you thank a stranger for holding the door or sending a thank-you note to someone who volunteers to help with a fund raiser, acknowledging other people can lead to new opportunities.

### TIPS to HELP YOU CULTIVATE GRATITUDE

The goal is to move your mind from thinking about gratitude occasionally to making it second nature.

- **Keep a gratitude journal:** Every day write down three things you're grateful for and why. Any thoughts or actions count, no matter how small.
- **Write a thank-you note or letter:** Make a habit of sending a note or letter once a month. Once in awhile write one to yourself.
- **Thank someone mentally:** No time to write? It may help just to think about someone who has done something nice for you, and mentally thank them.
- **Use gratitude cues:** Any new habit needs reminders, and cues is a great way to remain on course. Post positive notes or inspirational quotes on the fridge or by your computer to reinforce feelings of gratitude.
- **Make a gratitude jar:** Keep an empty jar, scratch paper and pen in an accessible place. Ask family members to write on a piece of paper one thing they are grateful for every day and drop it in the jar. Encourage them to be funny. During dinner or leisure time, take a few notes out of the jar and enjoy reading one another's thoughts.
- **Count your blessings:** Set aside time every week to reflect on things you're thankful for. Reflect on what went right or what you are grateful for. Think about the sensations you felt when something good happened.
- **Be grateful for the hard times:** Search for a lesson, benefit, or blessing in disguise during times of hardship.
- **Pray:** Use prayer to cultivate gratitude.
- **Meditate:** Mindfully stay focused on what you have to be grateful for in the present moment without judgement, and the people who deserve your gratitude.

By Barbara Mueller, RN, Faith Community Nurse

More information can be found at:

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/improve-health-practice-gratitude>

<https://health.harvard.edu/healthbeat/giving-thanks-can-make-you-happier>

Visit: [www.StAgnesShepherdstown.org](http://www.StAgnesShepherdstown.org) for "THE ART OF THANKSGIVING". Click on: Parish Health Newsletter

## THE ART OF THANKSGIVING

The art of thanksgiving is thanksgiving. It is gratitude in action. It is applying Albert Schweitzer's philosophy: "In gratitude for your own good fortune, you must render in return some sacrifice of your life for other life."

It is thanking God for the gift of life by living it triumphantly.

It is thanking God for your talents and abilities by accepting them as obligations to be invested for the common good.

It is thanking God for all that men and women have done for you by doing things for others.

It is thanking God for opportunities by accepting them as a challenge to achievement.

It is thanking God for happiness by striving to make others happy.

It is thanking God for beauty by helping to make the world more beautiful.

It is thanking God for inspiration by trying to be an inspiration to others.

It is thanking God for health and strength by the care and reverence you show your body.

It is thanking God for the creative ideas that enrich life by adding your own creative contributions to human progress.

It is thanking God for each new day by living it to the fullest.

It is thanking God by giving hands, arms, legs, and voice to your thankful spirit.

It is adding to your prayers of thanksgiving, acts of thanksgiving.

Wilferd A. Peterson

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We must do small things for one another with great love!

Mother Teresa

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