

Day 15

Prayer of Thanksgiving & Praise



For Personal Reflection & Prayer

- Today, name 3 things that you are thankful for.
- Describe the last time someone ‘lifted me up’ by being kind or considerate, bringing out the goodness within each person, the goodness of God. How did this affect my mood, my day, my own interaction with others?

Take these considerations to the Lord in prayer, asking for light and strength.

Offer a prayer inspired by the words of Scripture:

*Give thanks in all circumstances.
This is the will of God for you.*

*Continue in steadfast prayer,
Being watchful in it with thanksgiving.*

1 Thessalonians 5:18

Colossians 4:2

Pope Benedict XVI on Prayer of Thanksgiving

...I would like to reflect on the First Chapter of the Letter to the Ephesians that begins, precisely, with a prayer which is a hymn of blessing, an expression of gratitude, of joy. St Paul blesses God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, because in him he has made us “know the mystery of his will” (Eph 1:9). There truly is a reason to express gratitude if God enables us to know all that is hidden: his will with us, for us; “the mystery of his will”. “Mysterion” or “Mystery”: a term that recurs frequently in Sacred Scripture and in the Liturgy.

I do not want to enter into philology here, but in the common language it indicates what it is impossible to know, a reality we are unable to grasp with our own intellect. The hymn that opens the Letter to the Ephesians takes us by the hand and leads us toward a more



profound meaning of this term and of the reality that it points out to us. “Mystery”, for believers, is not so much the unknown as rather the merciful will of God, his plan of love which was fully revealed in Jesus Christ and offers us the possibility “to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and the length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ” (Eph 3:18-19). The “unknown mystery” of God is revealed, it is that God loves us and has loved us from the beginning, from eternity.

Let us therefore reflect a little on this solemn and profound prayer. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (Eph 1:3). St Paul uses the verb “euloghein”, which more often translates the Hebrew term “barak”; it is praising, glorifying and thanking God the Father as the source of the goods of salvation, like the One who “has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places”.

The Apostle thanks and praises, but he also reflects on the reasons that spur the human being to offer this praise, this thanksgiving, presenting the fundamental elements of the divine plan and its stages. First of all we must bless God the Father because, St Paul writes, “he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him” (v. 4). What makes us holy and blameless is love. God called us to existence, to holiness. And this choice even precedes the foundation of the world. We have always been in his plan and in his mind. With the Prophet Jeremiah we too can say that he knew us before he formed us in our mother’s womb (cf. Jer 1:5); and in knowing us he loved us. The vocation to holiness, that is, to communion with God belongs to an eternal design of this God, a design that extends through history and includes all the men and women of the world, because it is a universal appeal. God excludes no one, his plan is solely of love. St John Chrysostom says: God himself “rendered us holy but then we must continue to be holy. A holy man is he who is a partaker of faith” (Homilies on the Letter to the Ephesians, 1, 1, 4).

Paul continues, “he destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ”, to be incorporated in his Only-Begotten Son. The Apostle underlines the gratuitousness of this marvellous plan of God for humanity. God did not choose us because we are good, but because he is good. And antiquity had a phrase to say on goodness: *bonum est diffusivum sui*; goodness is communicated, it spreads. And thus, since God is goodness, he is the communication of goodness, he wishes to communicate; he creates because he wants to communicate his goodness to us and to make us good and holy.

At the heart of the prayer of blessing, the Apostle illustrates the way in which the Father’s plan of salvation is brought about in Christ, in his beloved Son. He writes: “in him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace” (Eph 1:7). The sacrifice of the Cross of Christ is the unique and unrepeatable

event with which the Father showed his love for us in a luminous way, not only in words but in practice. God is so real and his love is so real that he enters into history, he becomes a man to feel what it is, how it is to live in this created world, and he accepts the path of suffering of the Passion and even suffers death. God's love is so real that he does not only participate in our being but also in our suffering and our dying. The sacrifice of the Cross ensures that we become "God's property" because the Blood of Christ has redeemed us from sin, cleanses us from evil, removes us from the slavery of sin and death. St Paul invites us to consider the depths of God's love that transforms history, that transformed his very life from being a persecutor of Christians to being an unflagging apostle of the Gospel. Here once again the reassuring words of the Letter to the Romans resound: "If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, will he not also give us all things with him?... For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 8:31-32; 38-39). We must integrate this certainty — God is for us and no creature can separate us from him because his love is stronger — in our being, in our awareness as Christians...

Dear friends, when prayer nourishes our spiritual lives we become capable of preserving what St Paul calls "the mystery of faith" with a pure conscience (cf. 11 Tim 3:9). Prayer as a way of "accustoming" oneself to being with God brings into being men and women who are not motivated by selfishness, by the desire to possess or by the thirst for power, but by gratuitousness, by the desire to love, by the thirst to serve, in other words who are motivated by God; and only in this way is it possible to bring light to the darkness of the world...

https://www.vatican.va/latest/sub_index/hf_ben-xvi_aud_20120620_en.html

