

Column

With November comes Thanksgiving Day, but why wait for the actual day? Why not make the whole month a season of thankfulness? If we open our eyes, I think we shall find plenty for which to be grateful, one or more items for each day of this month.

This past week I received word that one of the sweetest ladies I have known – Ruby (Mrs. James) Tresca -- was nearing the end of her earthly life. She was living in Jacksonville, Fla. I am thankful that the day before she died her son put his telephone on speaker and allowed me to offer a prayer.

More than that, I am thankful for a call I received from this same lady two weeks earlier (before she had been taken ill) which ended with her saying, “I love you.” As long as life shall last for me, these three words will be written in indelible ink on my heart. For them I am grateful.

It doesn't take much thinking to come up with reasons for being thankful. Indeed, they are all around us, if we have eyes to see.

What about the roof over your head? According to a report issued earlier this year, an estimated 150 million people, or about 2 percent of the world's population, are homeless. The same report noted that about 1.6 billion people, more than 20 percent of the world's population, live in substandard housing.

For most of us, with these statistics before us, no matter how modest our dwelling, just a casual look around should prompt a profound sense of gratitude. But does it? Do we take time to look and think?

It is not just the physical structure and the fabric of our home that invite us to give thanks but the happy memories associated with each room: family gatherings on special days, visits from old and dear friends who may or may not still be with us, children discovering their toys on Christmas morning and the like.

But, what about unhappy things that took place under that roof? Might not even these prompt thankfulness? No matter how bad they were, by God's help, we got through them and perhaps gained strength and maturity as a result. Shall we not give thanks for God's presence and help?

The British-born, American poet Edgar Guest picked up on both -- laughter and tears -- in “It takes a heap o’ livin’ in a house t’ make it home.” In this poem, he mentions both sun and shadows, the birth of babies and the watch around the bed of the dying.

The apostle Paul, as far as we know, did not have a permanent dwelling in which to ruminate. Yet he knew the highs and lows of life of which Guest speaks. On one hand he had ecstatic experiences in which his eyes were opened to the glory of heaven (1 Corinthians 12:2-4). He also had his share of dark moments. He was shipwrecked, beaten, hungry and persecuted by friend and foe.

In the midst of both, this man of God remained confident and grateful. So much so that he issued a charge to all followers of Jesus: “In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.”

From this and other things he wrote, I think Paul would support the idea of a season rather than one day of thanksgiving. Indeed, he would want that season to extend all year long.

What about you? Giving thanks is a choice. Will you make it a priority?

DIRECT us, O Lord, in all our doings, with thy most gracious favour, and further us with thy continual help; that in all our works begun, continued, and ended in thee, we may glorify thy holy Name, and finally, by thy mercy, obtain everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (Book of Common Prayer)

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