For Personal Reflection

?

1. How do I experience gratitude?
2. What are the things—who are the people—that I am thankful for?
3. Am I a grateful person?
4. How do I express my gratitude to God?
5. How do I express my gratitude to others?
6. In what ways might I take my blessings for granted?
7. Am I a generous, positive person? Am I happy, pleasant and affable?
8. How am I generous with other people? Be specific.
9. In what ways might I need to be a more grateful or generous person? Be specific.

Further Reading

Introduction to the Devout Life. St. Francis de Sales. Part I, Chapters 10—12.

Treatise on the Love of God. St. Francis de Sales. Book XI, Chapter 8.

Spiritual Conferences. St. Francis de Sales. Chapter V, pages 74—87.. 19; Chapter VIII, p. 136; Chapter VI, p. 76.

De Sales
SPIRITUALITY SERVICES
"practical paths to holiness"

A Ministry of

OBLATES OF ST. FRANCIS DE SALES
V·J
TENUI NEC DIMITTAM
WILMINGTON–PHILADELPHIA

Visit us on the Internet:

www.oblates.org/dss

Email us:

dss@oblates.org

Volume 5 **Number 1**

Salesian Perspectives is a series of pamphlets published by De Sales Spirituality Services. The series offers practical approaches to holiness based on the lives and legacies of St. Francis de Sales and St. Jane de Chantal. Subscription information is available by contacting De Sales Spirituality Services. © 2005 by De Sales Spirituality Services. All rights reserved.

Giving Thanks...

SALESIAN PERSPECTIVES

The Practice of Gratitude

Thanksgiving and gratitude are very important things.

Gratitude is the state of being grateful. The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language defines gratitude as being "appreciative of benefits received; thankful; affording pleasure or comfort; agreeable." It comes from the Latin *gratus*, meaning "pleasing, beloved, agreeable, favorable, thankful."

"For all that, our giving thanks must go beyond being grateful for who we are and what we have in the eyes of God."

To be sure, there are many things in life for which we need to be thankful, things that, unfortunately, we all too often take for granted. In St. Francis de Sales' opinion, these things would include: (1) "Consider the nature that God has given to you. It is the highest in this visible world; it is capable of eternal life and of being perfectly united to his Divine Majesty." (2) "God has placed you in this world...to exercise his goodness in you by giving you his grace and glory. For this purpose God has given you intellect to know him, memory to be mindful of him, will to love him, imagination to picture to yourself his benefits, eyes to see his wonderful works, a tongue to know him…" just to name a few. (3) "Consider the earthly benefits that God has bestowed on you: the body itself, goods provided for its maintenance, health, comforts, friends, and other sources of strength and encouragement." (Introduction to the Devout Life, Part I, Chapters 10—12) And the list goes on and on.

Grateful yet?

"Consider the earthly benefits that God has bestowed on you: the body itself, goods provided for its maintenance, health, comforts, friends, and many other sources of strength and encouragement."

For all that, our giving thanks must go beyond being grateful for who we are and what we have in the eyes of God. Our thanksgiving must go deeper than our appreciation for "benefits received," for the many goods, blessings and graces that we enjoy.

Gratitude is really an attitude. It's a way of looking at life. It's a way of looking at God, ourselves and one another in ways that makes us "pleasing, beloved, agreeable and favorable."

In the Salesian tradition, gratitude expresses itself in another great virtue close to the heart of St. Francis de Sales.

Generosity.

Our gratitude for all that God gives us should spill over into our relationships with one another. What better way to show our gratitude to God than by being generous to one another?

In his Treatise on the Love of God, Francis de Sales echoed the words of St. Paul in describing the impact that giving thanks and being grateful should have upon us. Grateful people are not envious, but generous. Grateful people are not arrogant, but humble. Generous people are not disdainful, but amiable and affable. Grateful people are not easily provoked; they are peaceable. Grateful people do not rejoice over evil, but bask in the light of all that is right and good. Grateful people believe in and work for the good. Grateful people do not complain in the face of difficulty. (Book XI, Chapter 8)

Grateful people have a profound sense of trust: trust in God, and trust in others, nourished by the hope to which they are called in the person and promise of Jesus Christ.

"Gratitude is really an attitude. It's a way of looking at life. It's a way of looking at God, ourselves and one another in ways that makes us 'pleasing, beloved, agreeable and favorable.'"

Bottom line? Grateful people are positive people. As Francis de Sales told the Sisters of the Visitation nearly 400 years ago, for the humble, grateful, and generous person, all things are possible. (Conference V, pages 74-87)

In a word, to be *grateful* is to be *great* in the eyes of God.

Now *that's* something for which to *give thanks!*