

The Forgotten Thank You

Fr. Peter Krebs, S.T.



Every Thanksgiving we rejoice in the material abundance of our lives, a reflection of our forefathers gratitude for taming a strange, hostile land.

This year, we may choose to add another commemoration, to honor our being as a unique child of God.

Expressing gratitude for "being ourselves" may sound either simple or arrogant. It is neither. It is connected to self-acceptance, the most difficult of all human development processes. So much of our internal energy is devoted to self-rejection, that we have little energy left to look at ourselves in the wonderful way God created us.

Thanking God may be a way to transform self-rejection into self-acceptance. If we truly believe that we are created in the image of God, then we must consider that all He wants from us is to "be". But that is very difficult for humans who, from birth, are told how to act, how to love, how to work, how to play, how to live. Seldom are we encouraged to rejoice in being ourselves.

So many of us are often caught in cycles of self-rejection, that we push ourselves to limits of personal achievements dictated by our culture. To meet these standards, we learn to move adroitly, from juggling career and family needs to performing acts of human kindness. Then at Thanksgiving, we give thanks for the fruits of these labors, a beautiful home, healthy families, a bountiful harvest of material wealth. We also give thanks for being able to help the less fortunate: the poor the homeless, the afflicted.

With all this, do we have any energy left "to be"? We do. However, very often we don't know how.

Psychologist meet great resistance from clients when they encourage them to recite daily affirmations, such as "I am a good person", "I have touched many people without knowing it", "I am blessed with many gifts from God", mostly because they consider it self-praise, and that makes them very uncomfortable. We are, however, very comfortable praying to our God, in thanking and asking daily for strength, guidance and assistance."

We should be very comfortable also in thanking God for creating us as we are. Honoring God for creating us in His likeness is a special gift we can give Him, and ourselves. It is a first step toward self-acceptance - seeing ourselves as God sees us, in the beauty of His image.

What better way to start than with such a prayer of gratitude at Thanksgiving?

