



Our spiritual practice for today is the practice of gratitude. November is the season of Thanksgiving, but there may be a better way to practice gratitude than merely listing off things around the dinner table.

Diana Butler Bass in her book, *Grateful*, writes:

Gratitude is more than just an emotion. It is also a disposition that can be *chosen* and cultivated, an outlook toward life that manifests itself in actions – it is an ethic. By ethic, we mean a framework of principles by which we live more fully in the world. This ethic involves developing habits and practices of gratefulness that changes us for the better. Gratitude involves not only what we feel, but also what we do. Gratitude is both a feeling and a choice. This is why we “practice” gratitude. If we practice gratefulness, it becomes a natural and normal way of engaging with the world.

In April, we spoke about methods to practice gratitude: keep a gratitude journal, seek our prayers of gratitude, use all your senses to appreciate the miracle of being alive, set up visual reminders, expressing thanks and creating a gratitude jar.

Today, I would like to use embodied prayer to begin our practice of gratitude. Joyce Rupp, in her book, *Out of the Ordinary*, describes how she begins her day by joining body and spirit in praise and thanks. You may either sit or stand, whichever is comfortable for you.

- Offering the Creator praise and gratitude
Stretch your arms high and wide above your head.
“I thank you, Holy One, for the gift of another day of life.”
- Intentionally being aware of our spiritual bond with all of creation
Stretch your arms outward toward the cosmos.
“I reach out in compassion to my sisters and brothers throughout the universe.”
- Offering our life to the Holy One
Stretch your arms out straight in front of you, slightly apart, palms up.
“I give to you all I am and all I have.”
- Opening to accept what the Holy One offers me this day
Pull your hands close together and cup them as a container.
“I open my entire being to receive the gift that you have waiting for me in this new day.”
- Remembering to be kind to our planet Earth
Reach down toward your feet.
“I touch this planet, Earth, with awe, reverence, and gratitude, promising to care well for her today.”
- Awareness of the indwelling presence of the Holy One
Cross hands over your heart, and bow to the waist.
“May I be united with you throughout this day, aware of your love strengthening me and shining through me.”

A reading from Psalm 105

Gentle us, O Compassionate One, that
we tread the earth lightly
and with grace,
spreading peace, goodness, and love,
without harm to any creature.
For in gentle serenity is strength
and assurance;
confusion and suspicion find
no home here.
In all things may we be grateful,
our hearts open to joy.

Another method of practicing gratitude is seeking prayers of gratitude to remember to **choose** gratitude. I invite you to sit comfortably and listen to *Thank You for Each Moment* by Ted Loder.

Lord, thank you for each moment,
for the blue-sky moment,
the softening earth, the freshening wind,
for the sap flowing,
the bird nesting, the yellow bush,
for my full heart
and the joy rising in me.

Soften me
to receive whatever comes as a gift
and to praise you in it.

Lord, thank you for each moment,
for the twilight moment,
the pause, the good tired,
for the quiet reflection,
the slowing down, the mysterious sunset,
for my contented heart
and the wisdom growing inside me.

Gentle me
to feel whatever comes as a gift
and to praise you in it.

Lord, thank you for each moment,
for the midnight moment,
the loneliness, the fretful wondering,
for the watchful stars,
the long ache, the sleepless wait,
for my restless heart
and the hope straining in me.

Focus me
to see whatever comes as a gift
and to praise you in it.

Lord, thank you for each moment,
for the high- noon moment,
the job, the necessary routine,
for the sweaty struggle,
the high-risk challenge, the impulse to change,
for my fierce heart
and the courage gathering in me.

Ground me
to wrestle with whatever comes as a gift
and to praise you in it.

Lord, thank you for each moment,
for the shared moment,
the listening, the unguarded word,
for the fragile openness,
the ready smile, the accepted difference,
for my passionate heart
and the trust rooting in me.

Stretch me
to grow with whatever comes as a gift
and to praise you in it.

Lord, thank you for each moment,
for the charged moment,
the confrontation, the accurate demand,
for the heard decision,
the breathless gamble, the unexpected growing,
for my intense heart
and the truth expanding in me.

Excite me
to be open to whatever comes as a gift
and to praise you in it.

Lord, thank you for each moment,
for the holy moment,
the music, the child's eyes,
for the sunlight,
the touch, the tears,
for the trembling pleasure,
the unutterable beauty, the breathing,
for the life and love and heart in me, aware,
and the wholeness spreading in me.

Touch me
through whatever comes as a gift
that I may be graceful
and praise you in it all.

Let's pause for a few minutes to think of what we are grateful for.

Now let's take a few deep breaths.

Draw the energy of gratitude throughout your whole body. Feel every cell in your body smiling and opening to new energy. As we breathe in, say to yourself, *I am grateful for...* and as you breathe out, name what you are grateful for.

Breathe in *I am grateful for ...* breathe out *the ability to see the beauty of fall.*

We will close with an excerpt from Diana Butler Bass' Thanksgiving Prayer.

GOD, there are many days we do not feel grateful. When we are anxious or angry. When we feel alone. When we do not understand what is happening in the world or with our neighbors. When the news is bleak and confusing. When there are threats, injustice, violence, and war.

We struggle to feel grateful.

But today, we choose gratitude.

We choose to accept life as a gift from you, and as a gift from the unfolding work of all creation.

We choose to be grateful for the earth from which our food comes; for the water that gives life; and for the air we all breathe.

We choose to thank our ancestors, those who came before us, for their stories and struggles; we receive their wisdom as a continuing gift for today.

We choose to see our families and friends with new eyes, accepting them for who they are. We are thankful for our homes, whether humble or grand.

We choose to appreciate and care for our neighbors whatever our differences or how much we feel hurt or misunderstood by them.

We choose to see the world as our shared commons, our home now and the legacy we will leave to the generations to come.

We will make this choice of thanks with courageous hearts, knowing that it is humbling to say "thank you." We choose to open ourselves to your sacred generosity, aware that we live in an unending circle of gratitude.

We pledge to make thanks. We ask you to strengthen us in this resolve. Here, now, and into the future.

We choose thanks.

Amen

