

## Reflection for November 25, 2020 Thanksgiving Day

You crown the year with your goodness, \* and your paths overflow with plenty.

[Psalm 65.12]

Brother David Steindl-Rast suggests three ways to develop the practice of a grateful heart. <sup>1</sup> **First,** wake up to the surprises that appear each day.

At the end of each day, ask yourself, "What was unexpected today?"

You might at first have to look very hard, and you may have to break the habit of living with your eyes closed; you may have to let go of your pride in being realistic and practical you may have to let go of your reliance upon familiar patterns and rhythms.

But as your heart begins to open, you will begin to see at least one surprise in your life each day, a small joy you may have ignored, or you will remember someone or something you had forgotten. The spiritual discipline is to keep yourself looking until you see it.

**Second,** when you face emptiness or disappointment, ask yourself, "Where is the opportunity here?"

At the end of the day, instead of looking at what you have finished, look at what remains unfinished or undone not as a failure but as an opportunity, a door or opening to something new. Loose ends can be gateways or doorways.

## **Third,** respond to what you see.

God surprises us to wake us up, and God sustains us so that we can act more compassionately.

When we learn to live gratefully, we will learn to live trustfully.

When we live trustfully, we will no longer live in fear.

When we live without fear, we will be calm.

When we are calm, we will be open to God's surprises.

When we are open to God's surprises, we will live joyfully.

When we live joyfully, we feel a deep sense of belonging.

When we have a deep sense of belonging, we will be compassionate.

When we are compassionate, we will not be angry, or complacent, or violent.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> I have gleaned these thoughts from the writings of Brother David Steindl-Rast, O.S.B. at www.gratefulness.org

Ted Loder, "My Words Can't Carry All the Praise" Guerillas of Grace, p. 133: Glorious God, How curious and what a confession that we should set aside one day a year and call it Thanksgiving. I smile at the presumption, and hope that you smile, too. But the truth is Holy Friend that my words can't carry all the praise I want them to, or that they should, no matter how many trips they make. So this day, all is praise and thanks for all my days, I breathe and it is your breath that fills me. I look and it is your light by which I see. I move and it is your energy moving in me. I listen and even the stones speak of you. I touch and you are between finger and skin. I think and the thoughts are but sparks from the fire of your truth. . . . I laugh and it is the rustle of your passing. I weep and your Spirit broods over me. . . . .

O Glorious One. . .

for my life,

for those through whom I came to be,

for friends through whom I hear and see . . .

and for the One who brought a kingdom to me,

I pause to praise and [say]...

Thank you!