

Gratitude at Work at Work

How do you know if you are living our Catholic values at work? That question has challenged me most of my working life, especially as I had authority of some sort over others.

I think the dashboard indicator, the end measure of belief in a loving God, love for one's neighbor, and recognition of existence as a gifted creature of God, is gratitude. Genuine gratitude grows out of an appreciation and belief that all that we are is a gift directly or indirectly from God and many others. Our daily lives are a series of dependent and inter-dependent actions. We depend on others to act so that we may have water for morning ablutions, food for breakfast, a successful drive to work, clothing available for our bodies, an economic system that enables us to provide for the necessities of life and more.

What it comes down to is, "What attitude permeates our lives about all these gifts from others?" Do we see the good in our lives? Do we recognize the gifts, the special talents that we have? Do we recognize the gifts others give to us through each day? Do we appreciate that every time we have a dependent need satisfied by someone, we have received a gift? Do we realize that even when we pay for something, it is still a gift in that it is available at the time and place that we need it for a price we are able to pay—every transaction requires both a willing buyer AND a willing provider?

To develop the attitude of appreciation, I suggest taking two moments of reflection each day. Early in the day reflect on the day to come and resolve to look for three good things for which you will immediately give thanks. Late in the day, perhaps on the drive home from work or as you prepare for bed, reflect on the relationships and activities of the day. Review the thanks you gave during the day, and look for the unexpected "gifts-of-the-day" that you received and give thanks to God for them.

To give expression to the attitude of appreciation, certainly the immediate verbal "Thank you," is always appropriate. Stronger still, is taking a few moments to write a short note of thanks. Colin Powell tells of his practice of writing such notes and one time finding his note to a subordinate mounted in a \$100 frame and hung on the office wall. His note was a verbal thank you to the man. The framing and hanging of the note was an act of gratitude back to Powell.

Gratitude is expressed in many ways. Sometimes it may be non-verbal body language—the nod of the head, a wave of the hand and a smile, or an appreciative handshake. It is expressed by the lady who occasionally brings pies to the staff of a local auto dealer. It is expressed by business owners or plant managers who regularly walk the floor of their businesses greeting employees by name and speaking to them about their families. It is expressed by employees who put their best into each task and look for ways to improve their performance.

It takes faith and humility to accept that we are only one created being among many; that we have certain, limited gifts and depend on others to provide what we lack. It takes love to let God and our fellow creatures know that we recognize and are thankful for the gifts they give us each and every day. In a very real way, our expressions of gratitude are a measure of our humility, our love, and our faith.

GRATITUDE — A Faith Based Value at Work

1. What does applying the faith-based value of gratitude in your workplace mean to you? What do you think it would mean to those with whom you work? How does its meaning change for your different workplaces, for example, home or where you volunteer?
2. Why is it important to gain an understanding of gratitude in the workplace and how to apply that understanding?
3. How do/could you apply the concept of gratitude in your workplace(s)?
4. What would happen in your workplace if you took and actively applied the value of faith-based gratitude in your workplace(s)? How would the workplace sound different? Look different? Feel different?
5. What first step are you willing to take this week?