

Dr. Robert Emmon is a psychologist based at University of California - Davis; where his research examines the psychology of gratitude, addresses ways to maintain gratitude through different situations, and as well, he has discovered that gratefulness increases happiness.

He has developed a survey that measures a person's "Gratitude Quotient." It's a very brief survey – there are only six questions – and the answers range from strongly agree to strongly disagree. It consists of four positive questions and two negative questions.

I won't ask for a show of hands ... you can play along, though, in your places.

The positive questions are:

1. I have so much in life to be thankful for.
2. If I had to list everything that I felt grateful for, it would be a very long list.
3. I am grateful to a wide variety of people.
4. As I get older I find myself more able to appreciate the people, events, and situations that have been part of my life history.

And the negative questions are:

1. Long amounts of time can go by before I feel grateful to something or someone.
2. When I look at the world, I don't see much to be grateful for.

Scoring these questions, gives a person's "Gratitude Quotient" or "GQ."

Dr. Emmon gives "10 Ways to Become More Grateful" ... and I'll spare you the litany ... since, pretty much, they all boil down to "Just do it!"

Gratitude, like any of the virtues, requires that we practice it in as many ways as we can. We need to stretch and exercise our gratitude muscles in our hearts, our minds, and our voices in order to become better disposed for the heavy lifting.

In other words, if "you snooze, you lose" ... or put another way, "use it or lose it."

In the First Reading, we hear of Namaan's gratitude for being cured of his leprosy. However, gratitude wasn't the first thing on his mind. We only hear the end of the story. But, in the entire story, Namaan loses three things: his temper, his pride, and finally his leprosy.

Things don't go the way he expects. He complains that the prophet just told him to bathe seven times. No hand-waving. No chanting. No smoke. No mirrors. No show. No big deal.

And besides, he doesn't want to bathe in the Jordan River. Because compared to the rivers from his homeland, the Jordan was just a filthy little stream. But he eventually humbles himself, and follows the directions of the prophet, and is cured.

In the Second Reading, St. Paul is "*suffering*" ... "[*in*] *chains*" ... and is being "*treated like a criminal.*" Yet, he closes this section of his letter with a hymn. Elsewhere in Scripture, it is related that Paul would sing when he was in prison ... giving glory to God and expressing his thanks in song ... even in his letters!

And finally, in the Gospel, we hear about Jesus healing Ten men afflicted with the same disease as Namaan in the First Reading ... namely 'leprosy.'

They are all cured, but only one comes back "*to give thanks to God*"

And so, where does that leave us?

We are gathered here today to celebrate the Eucharist - which is from the Greek word for "*thanksgiving.*"

And so, as we approach this altar to receive the Sacred Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ ... let us resolve to exercise gratitude in our lives. To think thoughts of gratitude ... to pray prayers of gratitude ... and to speak words of gratitude ... every day ... in any way that we can.

And let us ask for the graces we need in this Eucharist - this great prayer of thanksgiving - to become more grateful in our lives and in our relationships ... with others and with God.