

## ***“Learning to keep company with Jesus”***

### ***The Spiritual Practice of Gratitude (Eucharist – Thanksgiving – Communion)***

**“In the past I always thought of gratitude as a spontaneous response to the awareness of gifts received, but now I realize that gratitude can also be lived as a discipline. The discipline of gratitude is the explicit effort to acknowledge that all I am and have is given to me as a gift of love, a gift to be celebrated with joy.”**

**Henri J. M. Nouwen**

***Spiritual practices are intended for our good. They are meant to bring the abundance of God into our lives. Turning them into laws or striving for perfectionism is a danger to avoid. Be simple, don’t evaluate yourself, open yourself to the loving presence of Christ as he guides you deeper.***

#### ***Questions for Reflection***

1. Where are you most able to celebrate God? Alone? With others? In worship? In music? In nature?
2. For what in your life are you most thankful?
3. How has a grateful person affected your own vision of what matters in life? How has someone who lives out of bitterness affected your life?

#### ***1. Noticing***

***“The grateful person knows that God is good, not by hearsay, but by experience. And that makes all the difference...”*** Thomas Merton

- Throughout the day, ask yourself, “What am I grateful for right now?” (perhaps at the top of each hour or before a meal – set an intentional time)
- Invite God to help you live fully in the present moment.
- Then, pause in the silence, and *listen, notice, look, feel*.
- Allow yourself to be surprised about what emerges for you as a source of gratitude.
- Write it down in a journal, if you like.

#### ***2. Rummaging for God: Praying Backwards through Your Day***

**““Rummaging for God” is an expression that suggests going through a drawer full of stuff, feeling around, looking for something that you are sure must be in there somewhere. I think that image catches some of the feel of what is classically known in church language as the prayer of “examen.” (from the website Rummaging for God...)**

- Pray for light – that God would reveal what God longs for you to notice
- Remember your day - walk through the past 24 hours, from hour to hour, from place to place, task to task, person to person, **thanking the Lord for every gift you encounter.**
- Notice the feelings that surface in the replay of the day.
- Choose one of the feelings (positive or negative) and pray from it.
- Look forward to tomorrow, committing what will come to God.

### 3. ***Gratitude in the darkness...***

**“Our challenge is to learn how to give thanks at the altar not only for the mixed blessings of Christ’s life but also for our own, to say “thank you” for the whole mess, the things we welcome as well as the things we risk our souls to escape.”**

- Get a current hardship firmly in mind.
- How do you feel about this hardship? Tell the truth of it to God.
- Where might you see God’s presence in this hardship?
- Is there anything you can be thankful for?
- If you cannot find God in your hardship, spend some time with Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. What does he want to tell you?