

GRATITUDE DEVOTIONAL



**INDIANA KENTUCKY SYNOD
HUNGER TASK FORCE**

Gratitude Tree



DAY 1

This devotional book was developed by the Indiana Kentucky Synod Hunger Team to help people reflect on gratitude. Each day, take time to reflect on the thought for each day.

Starting today, at the end of your reflection time, write down one thing that you are grateful for on the Gratitude Tree on the first page.

Practice
GRATITUDE

DAY 2

Gratitude is more than emotion. It is also a disposition that can be chosen and cultivated... Gratitude involves not just what we feel but what we do.-Diana Butler Bass

Colossians 3:15-17*

¹⁵ And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. ¹⁷ And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

**All Bible passages are taken from NRSVUE*

DAY 3

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. 1 Thess 5:16-18

I tremble with gratitude
for my children and their children
who take pleasure in one another.

At our dinners together, the dead
enter and pass among us
in living love and in memory.

And so the young are taught.

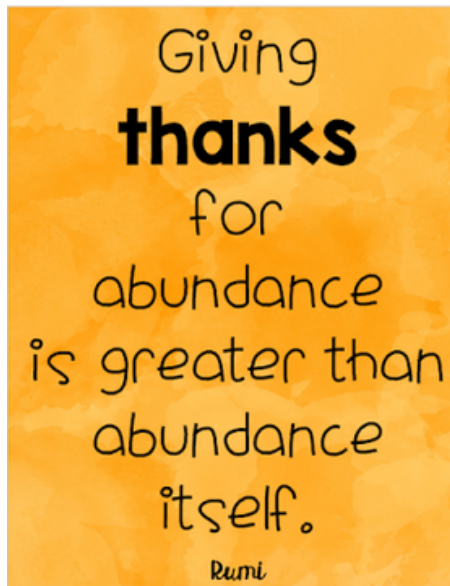
Wendell Berry [From *Leavings*, Counterpoint Press: 2009

Today, from the past, in the cloud of witnesses that surround us
and in the present, in all circumstances, what makes you
“tremble with gratitude?



DAY 4

When you wake up in the morning, write down one person you
look forward to be with that day. Write a detailed paragraph,
about a half a page, why you look forward to being with that
person.



DAY 5

**Giving thanks for abundance
is sweeter than the abundance itself:
Should one who is absorbed with the Generous One
be distracted by the gift?**

**Thankfulness is the soul of beneficence;
abundance is but the husk,
for thankfulness brings you to the place where the Beloved
lives.**

**Abundance yields heedlessness;
thankfulness brings alertness:
hunt for bounty with the net of gratitude.
*Rumi, translated by Kabir Helminski and Camille Helminski***

Consider the last line! How will you carry out this hunt?



DAY 6

Look at the image above.

What thoughts and feelings does this picture represent to you?

What feelings of gratitude may arise if you were in this setting?

DAY 7

Gratitude... invalidates the false narrative that... despair is the last word. Gratitude gives us a new story.-Diana Butler Bass

Romans 8:28

²⁸ We know that all things work together^[a] for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray without ceasing, ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.



DAY 8

Grant me enough trouble, that true compassion and understanding will grow in me.“ -Prayer in Tibetan Buddhist tradition

Can we be grateful for (some) of the trouble in our lives and the compassion and understanding it engendered?



DAY 9

IT FELT LOVE

Hafiz

**How did the rose
Ever open its heart
And give to this world
All its beauty?**

**It felt the encouragement of light
Against its being,
Otherwise,
We all remain
Too frightened**

Think of a person or animal who represents light, who represents a loving and kind presence in your life. This can be a good friend who is alive, maybe someone who has passed away, a pet, or maybe a spiritual figure such as the Dalai Lama, Jesus, or even the hand of God.

Take a moment to imagine that presence here, with you, looking into your eyes.

(continued on next page)



Now imagine that person saying to you, “May you be safe and protected from inner and outer harm”, “May you be happy,” “May you be free from fear”, “May you be healthy in body and mind”.

You can also create your own wishes and aspirations her

Now turn toward that person and say that with the same intention to them.

Now imagine your family and friends with you (those who you feel difficulty with and those who you feel more ease with) and with intention, saying those same words.

Take a moment to just feel into how you are doing and whatever is there, just letting it be.



DAY 10

“In this pleasure,” writes Wendell Berry, “we experience and celebrate our dependence and our gratitude, for we are living from mystery, from creatures we did not make and powers we cannot comprehend.”

While speaking specifically about Thanksgiving, here, he often teaches about how our lives are intertwined and interdependent- with each other and with all of creation.

What connections do you see between gratitude and our interdependence? How does that intersect with the mystery of God and Jesus’ teaching to love God and love one another?

DAY 11



What circumstances or things that you are holding on to, keep you from experiencing gratitude about them or other areas of your life?



DAY 12

**"Gratitude is... more than just an emotion... it is an ethic."
Diana Butler Bass**

James 2:14-17

¹⁴ What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but does not have works? Surely that faith cannot save, can it? ¹⁵ If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill," and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? ¹⁷ So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.

DAY 13

In Judaism, a *berakhah*, *bracha*, *brokho*, *brokhe* (Hebrew: בְּרָכָה; pl. בְּרָכוֹת, *berakhot*, *brokhoys*; "benediction," "blessing") is a formula of blessing or thanksgiving, (بركة:Arabic) recited in public or private, usually before the performance of a commandment, or the enjoyment of food or fragrance, and in praise on various occasions.

The function of a *berakhah* is to acknowledge God as the source of all blessing. It can be both a declaration of dependence and an expression of gratitude for God and his gifts. Berakhot also have an educational function to transform a variety of everyday actions and occurrences into religious experiences designed to increase awareness of God at all times.

Here are a few examples from Anya Krugovoy Silver “A Handful of Berakhot”

For buckling my son’s shoes

Blessed art though, O Lord, Our God, Ruler of the Universe
For the tongue and the sole, for binding his foot to the earth

Write one berakhah for an ordinary thing on your life that you use frequently, for a common action that you can recite repeatedly.



DAY 14



Take a few moments to reflect on this quote.

Why do you think gratitude can change your outlook on your daily life circumstances?

On your gratitude tree today, put down one ordinary thing in your life that you take for granted.

DAY 15

“Usually, people lose their health though they spent only 5 years in prison, but how did you manage your health for 27 years in prison?”

**Mandela replied with a smile,
“I enjoyed my time. When I was doing hard labor, I enjoyed my time at the thought that I was outside in nature. I gave thanks, looking up to the blue sky and looking down at the green grass. Other prisoners were held in their frustration and anger, but I emptied myself of all my anger and practiced forgiveness. I gave thanks at every moment. I gave thanks for my food and drink, and even when I was forced to do hard labor. Then I was embraced by all the happiness in the world.”**

DAY 16

Psalm 103:1-5

**Bless the Lord, O my soul,
and all that is within me,
bless his holy name.**

**² Bless the Lord, O my soul,
and do not forget all his benefits—**

**³ who forgives all your iniquity,
who heals all your diseases,**

⁴ who redeems your life from the Pit,

who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy,

⁵ who satisfies you with good as long as you live^[a]

so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.



DAY 17



PSALM

Mary Nelson

**So many cars have driven past me
without a head-on collision.
I started counting them today:
there were a hundred and nine
on the way to the grocery,
a hundred and two on the way back home.
I got my license
when I was seventeen.
I've driven across country
at least twelve times;
I even drive
late Saturday nights.
I shall not want.**

**How do we express our gratitude when we arrive safely at our
destination? What are our thoughts when we encounter an
accident on the highway?**

"Psalm" by Marilyn Nelson, from The Fields of Praise. © Louisiana State University Press, 1997. Reprinted with permission.

DAY 18

A PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

Before I begin, I would like to offer a brief prayer of thanksgiving that I have relied upon heavily, especially throughout the past year as we have suffered as a community, and as a nation, and as a world, in so many ways:

Let us remember that we are in the holy presence of God.

Loving Creator,

We asked for strength, and you gave us difficulties to make us strong.

We asked for wisdom, and you gave us problems to solve.

We asked for prosperity, and you gave us purpose and brains to use.

We asked for courage, and you gave us fears to overcome.

We asked for patience, and you gave us situations where we were forced to wait.

We asked for love, and you gave us troubled people to help.

We asked for justice, and you called us to be just and to lead with integrity.

Lord, we have received nothing that we asked for or wanted.

And yet, we received everything that we needed.

For this, we give thanks.

Written and offered by Dr. Colleen Hanycz on 1/25/21 at the “Introduction to the Xavier Community” event upon her selection as the 35th president of Xavier University

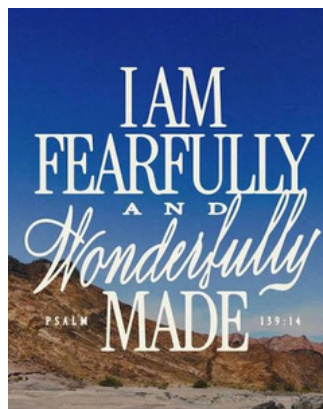
DAY 19

Every day, regardless
of the night's previous
sulks or arguments

morning climbs into bed
breathless as a child
eager to play.

Yahia Lababidi

Reflect on your new beginnings. What allowed or enabled you to overcome arguments and allowed you to play?



DAY 20

"Gratitude is not about stuff. Gratitude is the emotional response to the surprise of our very existence... 'I am fearfully and wonderfully made.'" -Diana Butler Bass

Psalm 139:14

¹⁴ I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

Wonderful are your works;
that I know very well.

DAY 21



John 10:10

¹⁰ The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

What gives your life a feeling of abundance?

DAY 22

I Thessalonians 5:18

"...give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

**Is it hard for us to be thankful in all circumstances?
What things in your life have we taken for granted?**

DAY 23

**"Dependence may enslave the soul, but interdependence frees us."-Diana Butler Bass
(continued on next page)**

1 Corinthians 12:12-27

¹² For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³ For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

¹⁴ Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many.

¹⁵ If the foot would say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁶

And if the ear would say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of

smell be? ¹⁸ But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. ¹⁹ If all were a single member,

where would the body be? ²⁰ As it is, there are many members yet one body. ²¹ The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of

you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” ²² On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker

are indispensable, ²³ and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our less

respectable members are treated with greater respect, ²⁴ whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so

arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, ²⁵ that there may be no dissension within the body, but

the members may have the same care for one another. ²⁶ If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.

²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

DAY 24

After a meeting, this could be a professional meeting or a social meeting, send a text or an e mail to each person who attended the meeting. In that communication, tell each person one specific thing you appreciated about them at the meeting. You want this to be rather specific.



DAY 25

Philippians 4:4-7

4 Rejoice^[a] in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.^[b] 5 Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. 6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

How do you think Thanksgiving can change anxiety to peace?

DAY 26

We are safer and happier when we care for each other in community, when we do things for each other. -Diana Butler Bass

Galations 6:2

² Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill^[a] the law of Christ.

Acts 2:42-47

⁴² They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

⁴³ Awe came upon everyone because many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. ⁴⁴ All who believed were together and had all things in common; ⁴⁵ they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds^[a] to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶ Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home^[b] and ate their food with glad and generous^[c] hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

COMMUNITY

DAY 27



**What in your life do you have in abundance?
How could you share it with others?**



DAY 28

**Our enemies provide us with a precious opportunity to practice
patience and love. We should have gratitude toward them.**

Dalai Lama

**Who in your life makes you practice patience and love?
Why do you think the Dalai Lama says you should have
gratitude toward them?**



DAY 29

How can something so simple be so profound, letting others go first, in traffic or in line at Starbucks, and even if no one cares or notices? Because for the most part, people won't care—they're late, they haven't heard back from their new boyfriend, or they're fixated on the stock market. And they won't notice that you let them go ahead of you.

They take it as their due.

But you'll know. And it can change your whole day, which could be a way to change your whole life. There really is only today, although luckily that is also the eternal now. And maybe one person in the car in the lane next to you or in line at the bank or at your kid's baseball game will notice your casual generosity and will be touched, lifted, encouraged—in other words, slightly changed for the better—and later will let someone else go first. And this will be quantum.

The movement of grace toward gratitude brings us from the package of self-obsessed madness to a spiritual awakening. Gratitude is peace.-Ann Lamotte

✦✦ *Gratitude* ✦

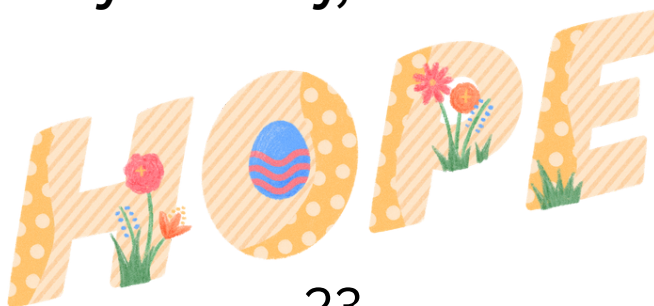
DAY 30

During a time of crisis, historian and author Diana Butler Bass shares an experience of committing to a practice of gratitude:

I did the only thing I could think of doing—simply saying “thanks” as I went through the day. I woke up with a brief prayer: “Thank you that I am alive.” I got coffee and breakfast: “Thank you for this food, this day.” I looked out the window: “Thank you for sunshine.” I went into my office: “Thank you for words, for work.”...

Even when it comes to thankfulness, sometimes you have to take what you can get. I took nothing for granted.... Over the weeks, with my hapless prayers, I discovered something quite unexpected: gratitude, like interest, compounds. This simple form of giving thanks made me pay attention and start looking for particular reasons to be grateful. There would always be grounds for ingratitude. Always. Seeking out the small things for which I could give thanks, however, changed my field of spiritual and emotional vision. I learned not to focus on what was lacking....

Gratitude is not a form of passive acceptance or complicity. Rather, it is the capacity to stare doubt, loss, chaos, and despair right in the eye and say, “I am still here.”



DAY 31



Reflect on your gratitude tree and what you have learned this month. Write down your closing thoughts below.