

Sacks says: "That, in different ways, is the logic of prayer, of making blessings, of Shabbat (the Sabbath), and many more elements of Jewish life". Dr Sacks appreciates that the attitude of thankfulness is neither easy nor natural, and that we are genetically predisposed to pay more attention to the negative rather than the positive. Biological reasons make us hyper-alert to potential dangers.

It is important to recognise that people who are suffering must not be burdened by feeling that there is an expectation that a positive mental attitude cures all. It does not. However, giving thanks to God is something we should always try to do. Statements in Catholic literature on the need to thank God are legion. Here are a few: **St. Gianna Beretta Molla**: "The secret of happiness is to live moment by moment and to thank God for all that He, in His goodness, sends to us day after day."; **St. Thérèse of Lisieux**: "Jesus does not demand great actions from us, but simply surrender and gratitude."; **Pope St. John Paul II**: "These words invite us to remember the past with gratitude, to live the present with enthusiasm and to look forward to the future with confidence." Finally we should recall that Jesus Himself often gave thanks to the Father, perhaps most poignantly when He raised Lazarus for the dead and said (John 11:41): "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me".

(1)Judaism's Life-Changing Ideas

-Stephen S

Entrance antiphon: Turn your ear, O Lord, and answer me; save the servant who trusts in you, my God. Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I cry to you all the day long.

First Reading: Joshua 24: 1-2,15-18

Responsorial Psalm: 33: Taste and see that the Lord is good. /R

Second Reading: Ephesians 5:21-32

Gospel Acclamation: Alleluia, alleluia! Your words are spirit, Lord, and they are life: you have the message of eternal life. Alleluia!

Gospel: John: 6: 60-69

Memorial Acclamation: When we eat this Bread and drink this Cup, we proclaim your Death, O Lord, until you come again.

Communion Antiphon: The earth is replete with the fruits of your work, O Lord; you bring forth bread from the earth and wine to cheer the heart.



Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle B, 2024

Weekly Reflection: Some thoughts of Dr Jonathan Sacks (4): Thankfulness and the Nun Study: A chapter in the Former Chief Rabbi's book (1) deals with giving

thanks to God. It notes that the first words Jewish people are taught to say each morning are: "I give thanks". Leviticus (7:11-13) sets out how the Jewish people were to make a thanksgiving offering to God. Dr Sacks feels that the almost universal instinct to give thanks to other people for things they have done for us is a signal of transcendence in the human condition and, though not a proof of the existence of God, is nonetheless an intimation of something deeply spiritual in the human heart. He refers discusses to the 'Nun Study', a major piece of medical research which revealed the dramatic effects of thanksgiving. In summary, some 700 U.S. Notre Dame nuns in the 1930s (then in their 20s) were asked by their Mother Superior to write a brief autobiographical account of their life and their reasons for entering the convent. Using an elaborate coding system and annually assessing the nuns, all of whom lived very similar lifestyles, the researchers were able to test whether their emotional state in the 1930s had an effect on their health 60 years later. The startling result was that those who expressed more positive emotions (gratitude, commitment, love, happiness and hope) were more likely to be alive and well 60 years later, there being a difference of some 7 years in life expectancy.

Dr Sacks tells us that the nun study led to a flurry of research which has shown that developing an attitude of gratitude improves physical health and immunity against disease. Thankfulness reduces damaging emotions such as resentment, revenge, frustration and regret, and the likelihood of depression. Grateful people tend to have higher self-respect and better relationships with others. Gratitude is also a self-fulfilling attitude: the more we celebrate the good, the more good we discover that is worthy of celebration. Focused attention on celebrating the good in life, and thanking God (and others) for it, makes us aware of how much we have to be grateful for. Dr