

Impact

Bring faith to life. Find life in faith.

Step back

It is good to reflect from time to time

Have you ever had the experience of being too close to something? Something at work, perhaps, or with a friend or family member? We sometimes lose perspective, focusing so intently on a situation that we no longer see it clearly. We have to step back in order to gain the clarity we need.

The same holds true in our spiritual life.

Sometimes we have to step back in order to see life and faith clearly. We conclude the liturgical year this month. At this point each liturgical year, the Sunday readings encourage us to step back and take the long view:

- Recognize that every day is a gift from God; we do not know when our final day of life on earth will be. As sobering as it is to think about this, it is also good for us to do so. It is a reminder that every day is precious and that our daily actions matter.
- Put Christ at the center of our lives. When we do this, everything else falls into place.
- Draw on faith even in, especially in, the most challenging times.

This is the perfect time to look back and look ahead.

- Does God have a meaningful place in your life? Does your faith guide your daily decisions?
- Are you sometimes distracted, too busy, or too focused in one area of life to the exclusion of everything (or everyone) else?
- Are you mindful to see God's grace and goodness in the daily moments of your life?
- Are you stressed and tired? Do you spend time with the people you love, and give of yourself in service?
- Do you use your material and financial resources wisely and share with those in need?

Soon, we will mark the end of 2023 and the beginning of a new calendar year. This is the perfect time to look back, reflect on our lives in light of faith, and to look ahead to the coming year with renewed commitment to live as disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ.



Impact
this
month

1. Take a step back. Designate time in the coming weeks to reflect on the past year. Invite your spouse or a good friend to reflect with you.

2. Look at your life with honesty. In what ways have your daily decisions reflected your commitment to love God, follow Jesus, and serve your neighbor?

3. Look ahead in hope. Make a list of ways you will live as a disciple of Jesus Christ, and share your time, faith, talents, and resources in the future?

SHARING CHRIST'S LOVE



"For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me." (Mt 25:35-36)

At the end of a long day, Marty walked from his office downtown to the parking lot across the street. He dreaded this moment more each day, the moment in which he would encounter the homeless man who had appeared on the corner last week. At first, Marty tried to ignore him, but a few days ago their eyes had met, and suddenly Marty found himself wondering about the man at other times of the day, and he began to pray for him.

Today, Marty knew he needed to act on what was in his heart. He had called a friend last evening, and the two of them approached the man together. Marty looked the man in the eye, handed him his coat and a card with information about the local shelter which Marty's parish supports. "Can we walk you there?" he asked.

"Sure," the stunned man replied. "Let's go." Marty knew they were helping a man who needed clothing, food, and warmth, but who yearned for care, compassion and respect even more. What the man could not imagine was how his presence had changed Marty. While Marty had gone to Mass each Sunday and had put a few dollars in the collection basket most weeks, he had never really acted on his faith in such a direct way before. He had listened to last Sunday's Gospel reading and was moved by what he heard that seemed to elude him before: our faith is built upon a relationship with God and should change the way we relate to one another; our encounter with Christ in the celebration of the Eucharist calls us to be awake to the presence of Christ in others.

It is easy to become overwhelmed by the needs of so many in our local towns and cities and in our world. Some of us respond by tuning out, turning off the sights and sounds, and creating a false sense that all is right and well in the world. Others of us do something: we respond directly, with action, resources, commitment, and prayer.

This year has been one of trial for many in our world. Let us be grateful for all who have been good stewards, serving those whose lives were touched by natural disaster, economic challenge, war, poverty and loneliness. As we celebrate Thanksgiving and begin a new liturgical year, may each of us find the strength to grow as stewards who yearn to hear our Lord say of us, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world... Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of the least brothers of mine, you did for me."

practice gratitude

Our national celebration of Thanksgiving provides a reason to reflect on all for which we have to be grateful.

Gratitude is not only for Thanksgiving day. In reality, beginning each day by stepping back to reflect on our many blessings will have lasting impact on each of us and all whom we touch at home, work or school, and in service.

When we begin with gratitude, we recognize God's grace in our midst.

Many people have been taught to think about life through a perspective of scarcity: What is missing? What needs fixing? Starting with thanksgiving provides a perspective of abundance. We see that each day and all that surrounds us is a gift from God, and we grow in our desire to share with others out of gratitude for our many blessings.

Choosing abundance over scarcity takes practice. Consider the following to practice gratitude:

Begin each day with a brief moment of gratitude. Express thanksgiving at meals. End the day by noticing the many times you were blessed. At first, this may seem awkward or forced. Stay with it! You'll soon recognize God's abundant grace beyond what you are able to comprehend.

Ask God to guide your heart and life, so that your daily comings and goings may be reflections of gratitude for all you are and have. Such a grateful life does take practice. It is sure to have lasting impact, bringing faith to life in wonderful ways!