



Thanksgiving in the Greek is called eucharistia. The heart of that word is charis, which means grace. So the heart of eucharist is grace, and the heart of grace, charis, is the word, chairô, which means "to rejoice." Thanksgiving, then, means to rejoice in God's presence for blessings freely received from him. It is joy expressed in word and deed toward God for his grace.

THE GIFT OF THE GOSPEL

The gift of the Gospel is at the origin of our fraternity. In the Testament of Francis the gift of the brothers and the gift of the evangelical form of life go hand-in-hand. When the first two companions of Francis asked him what they must do to live with him, he replied: "Let us ask counsel of Christ," and with them he went into the church to open the book of the Gospel three times. There it is Christ who speaks, and from listening to His voice is born that new bond in the Spirit which is the first fraternity. The little group of brothers, the seed of the Franciscan Order, in this founding moment precedes any distinction by ministry. They are just believers who wish to take the Gospel seriously.

Like Francis and many brothers in our history who knew how to put their gifts at the service of the Good News, we too feel called to receive the gift of the Gospel and to respond to it creatively with our life, with concrete actions, through the exercise of our own gifts. We wish to learn to listen to the word of Jesus and to offer it to the men and women of today, in the spirit of the Gospel, traveling the paths of the world as Lesser Brothers, evangelizers with our heart turned to the Lord.

In its deepest essence, the Gospel is a gift meant to be shared. Being sent to evangelize comes from its very depths and is at the same time a demand of the faith. An authentic experience of God, in fact, puts us in movement because it is not possible to

sense the infinite

embrace of a God who, being

love and only love, loves

to the extent of folly

, without feeling at the same time the urgent need to share this experience with others. In the final analysis, to evangelize means to have the experience of Emmaus, setting out on the road to make an offer of faith through shared witness. And the one who shares, makes a response

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We Franciscans will continue to attend to the poor and most vulnerable through our work in healthcare and education, our care for those living with HIV, our programs of trauma healing and creation of micro-industries for women, girls and other vulnerable groups, and our outreach to the poor and marginalized who number more than 15 million living in the 'developed' world. We also will continue to promote peace and reconciliation through our presence in Africa, the Middle East, Southeast Asia, Latin and South America, Europe and North America.

Through the work of our Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation office in Rome, and work of similar offices throughout the world, we raise the voice of those who are most affected and defend their fundamental human rights.

Through our work with Franciscans International at the United Nations, a work that involves all branches of the Franciscan movement worldwide and with a collective voice of more than 800,000, we work with the international community in order to promote economic, political, cultural and social systems that respond to the needs of human beings and contribute to world peace and greater care for the environment.

We are not silent when human rights are violated anywhere in the world. We do not stand by when governments or corporations engage in unethical use of natural resources. Nor are we silent in the face of the more than 600,000 human beings, primarily women, girls and children, who are bought and sold – trafficked – for commercial sex or degrading labor.

We are not silent because the Gospel and the invitation of St. Francis of Assisi, and that of the Church, require this of us as 'brothers' to all of humanity and to creation.

Michael A. Perry OFM, Vicar General
June 22, 2009

LET US GIVE THANKS



Whether a brother or priest, all Franciscans profess and live by three vows: Poverty, Chastity and Obedience. •

Poverty means he will live a life of simplicity without anything of his own. In an age of unbridled materialism and consumerism, the Franciscan Friar is dedicated to having "nothing of his own." He will not cling to material things, but will focus on putting people and the needs of others -- especially the poor -- before all else. He will not cling to his way of doing things, but will always defer to the needs of the community.

Chastity means he will be celibate for the Kingdom of God. To live a chaste, celibate life is a call to love all God's people and not enter into exclusive relationships. While we are all sexual beings, Chastity is a way of loving that is not expressed genitally. It opens and draws the Friar into a deeper union with Christ, who Himself was celibate.

Obedience means the Franciscan priest or brother will be at service to something larger than himself. He will place his trust in God through decisions made by his Franciscan community. Obedience underlies the fact no one person has all the answers, and he will listen to the collective wisdom of others. Ultimately, the vow is an openness to the will of God in living out the Gospel life.

A Hebrew Blessing



Blessed are You, O Lord our God, Eternal King, Who feeds the whole world with Your goodness, With grace, with loving kindness, and with tender mercy. You give food to all flesh, for Your loving kindness endures forever. Through Your great goodness, food has never failed us.

O may it not fail us forever, for Your name's sake. Since You nourish and sustain all living things, and do good to all, and provide food for all Your creatures Whom You have created.

Blessed are You, O Lord, Who gives food to all.

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