

A Marianist Moment - Family Online November 2021

By Bro. David Betz, SM

Gratitude and Hope

Recently I participated in a Bay Area (Cupertino, CA) Affiliate Gathering on Zoom, and we were reflecting on gratitude. One of the participants shared that with gratitude comes hope. I began to reflect on that statement: According to the Oxford Dictionary, gratitude is the quality of being thankful; readiness to show appreciation for and to return kindness. Hope, according to a faith perspective, is to trust and wait expectantly - looking forward.

I find that having gratitude is essential in building relationships with others and with God. Gratitude enables me to be cognizant of the blessings in my life and even the challenges which call me to conversion. It is these blessings and challenges that contribute to the deepening of my relationships with others and God. I need to be willing to say "thank you" for the blessings and challenges so the deepening can take place.

When gratitude is expressed, I acknowledge that I have trust in what is occurring. And it is in trusting that there is an opportunity to experience a loving moment between myself and the other person. And this loving moment contributes to the deepening of the relationship between the two people.

Our Marianist Saints have expressed gratitude many times during their lives, even at the end of their lives. They saw hope in their expression of gratitude in these final moments as a grace. It brought them peace and comfort knowing that they were experiencing God's loving embrace when they knew that they were going to meet their God in the life after.

Here are two examples:

Venerable Faustino Perez-Manglano final entry in his diary:

"I am very happy. I don't know what it is, but thanks be to God, I don't have bad things happen to me and am always happy. I feel something within, such an enormous love for the one who has always held my hand and who has never let me fall, not even once, into mortal sin. I don't know what problems are. Thank you, Jesus, for giving me such an awesome feeling. I am very grateful." (See pp. 86-87, Maybe God Will Speak to Me, José María Salaverri, SM, North American Center for Marianist Studies, Dayton, OH 2003)

Blessed Jakob Gapp, SM, from his final letter (August 13, 1943) to Fr. Franz Josef Jung, SM, Superior General:

"During the time of my imprisonment, that is, since November 9 last year, I have had ample opportunity to reflect on my life. I thank you from the bottom of my heart for all that you have done for me during the time that I have known you. I consider myself as still belonging to the Society of Mary; I renew my vows and offer myself up through the hands of our heavenly Mother to our dear Lord. Please excuse any annoyances that I might have caused you. I have suffered difficulties, but now I am very happy. I think that I have become holier in this difficult time." (See p. 109, Blessed Jakob Gapp, SM, Josef Levit, SM, Servant of God Series, North American Center for Marianist Studies, Dayton,

OH, 1998)