

THANKS TO OUR HEAVENLY FATHER

(Written by: Bill Dodds in Our Sunday Visitor)

So as we begin a New Year, how do we – how can we – sincerely say “thanks” to Our Heavenly Father in 2017?

1. Go to Mass

No doubt you know that word “Eucharist” is from the Greek for “thanksgiving” or “gratitude”. Great! Go to Mass. A done deal. Next.

Not so fast. It’s an action of thanksgiving, which certainly implies us doing something there besides stand, sit, kneel, walk up for Communion, stay for a closing hymn and head out the door. Without our actively taking part in the Mass. i.e. praying with others, offering our own private prayers, reverently receiving the Blessed Sacrament, joining in the singing – then we’re pretty much like that child blurting a fast and nearly thoughtless “thank you” to appease Mom.

2. Do what Jesus told us to do

It means more than breaking of the bread in memory of Him (Lk 22:19), but He also mentioned something about “love one another as I have loved you”. What better way to show gratitude for the gift of faith than to live the Faith? We should read about what He did, by praying the Gospels. Then, too, living the Faith – our gratitude to God – means living the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. Sometimes challenging, but other times it’s pretty simple. Small choices throughout the day can develop over time into virtuous habits that make us more inclined and better prepared to tackle those challenging opportunities.

3. Don't put a gift from God in your sock drawer

Sometimes we receive a gift from a family member or friend and quietly tuck it away in a dresser drawer. When we do that with a gift from "God it runs counter to what Jesus taught in the Parable of the Talents (Mt 25:14-30). Use what God gives you!

Pay attention to the talents God has given you, develop them, and use them to help others.

4. Say "thank you" to others...and mean it

Consider this: In describing the Last Judgment, Jesus said, "What you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me" (Mt. 25:45). So part of what you can easily do for others throughout this New Year, which is a gift from God, is thank them. "Thank you" to the store clerk, your child's teacher, the Sunday homilist and on and on.

5. Write it down

Keeping a daily journal or log of people, events and things for which they're grateful, helps you mentally and physical. You – lucky you, thank God – have that added layer or, more accurately, that foundation of Catholicism. Jotting down a few things at the end of every day can be a prayer of thanksgiving.

6. Take care if yourself

Not taking your health for granted is a key way of thanking God for the priceless gift that is good health. Paying a bit more attention to what you are eating. Hand washing, brushing teeth and flossing and ways to stay healthy. Cutting back on screen time to get more sack time. An addiction can be physically, mentally or

emotionally crippling. Care for yourself! Taking care of your self also means going to confession. Turning to God in that way can be easily overlooked but it's one that has, well, eternal consequences. What a great way to thank God for your immortal soul.

7. Avoid ingratitude

Try to be thankful and not fall into the habit of feeling like “I deserve this.”

Finally, thank God, that God doesn't give us what we really deserve.

AMEN!

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