

Our faith in Christ should flow like water

written by Anthony Gehrig |

Recently I've found myself lacking gratitude in my daily life. During this past spring break, I returned to my *pueblo natal* (birthplace) of La Paz, Bolivia, to renew my daily commitment to a life of gratitude to God and others.

After joining my father to support water supply development efforts, I finally came to understand that when depending on one's environment to survive, basic human needs like water can be seen either as a "given" or a "gift from God." Taking necessities like water for granted has become an unrecognized privilege to us. Meanwhile, for the world's materially poor, access to safe water and other necessities often remains an unrealized basic human right.

Being born to Catholic missionaries in La Paz, I started my life in the Andean highlands. I hadn't returned since I was a toddler, so this experience was different from what I only vaguely remembered. The people I encountered were especially hospitable despite facing poverty and limited opportunities. One visit in particular impacted me the most.

On one of our last days, we traveled to the remote village of Cuipa Kahuayo in the Bolivian countryside. The people were celebrating the inauguration of their first-ever community drinking water system. More than 70 families finally had access to safe, spring-fed water in their homes after generations of relying on dirty river flows and contaminated, open wells.

They received what we take so often for granted. Their sincere thanksgiving to God and reverence toward Mother Earth were woven into the entire inauguration ceremony.

Toil, sacrifice, local municipal support and significant donations from people of faith and goodwill in the United States via Water Engineers for the Americas and Africa (wefta.net) made the opportunity possible.

The joy each community member shared poured over me like a raging river. I was blessed with a necklace full of colorful flowers and oversized vegetables — potatoes, carrots, turnips and flowers — all produce of the Bolivian high plain Altiplano, representing the life now possible from access to water.

Witnessing how important this day was to those families and their gratitude opened my eyes to how much I take simple things like safe drinking water for granted. I began to realize how blessed I truly am.

While talking about gratitude with my Subiaco mentor, Brother Sebastian Richey, I was directed to the Bible passage of 10 lepers healed by Jesus in Luke 17:11-19. In it, only one of the 10 lepers returned to show gratitude to Jesus for cleansing their lives.

Brother Sebastian explained to me that "the Samaritan, an outcast, recognizes Jesus' power and expresses gratitude, while the others take their healing for granted. Jesus highlights the importance of acknowledging God's blessings and how the power of faith can transform us. It should also be a reminder to cultivate a heart of gratitude and help us recognize God's work in our lives."

Ongoing, authentic gratitude and repentance transform our lives, saving us just as the healed Samaritan was in his gratitude and faith in Jesus.

As a recent graduate of Subiaco Academy — my home away from home these past four years — I have grown to recognize God's goodness in my daily life. I am forever thankful for the guidance and support I received from my family, friends, teachers and mentors along my journey at Subiaco. The witness of the monks in their daily lives of community prayer, and in their spiritual guidance of students, are additional causes for my gratitude to God and to them. One of Subiaco's gifts to me is learning to live in gratitude as a joy-filled discipline, and not just spontaneous reactions to moments when things work out my way.

I have come to understand that gratitude is a gift of love to be celebrated with joy and shared with others — flowing like water out of our faith in Christ.

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Teens without Christ will look to fill void

written by Anthony Gehrig |

"Where there is family, there is love." Popular quotes like this are often seen framed and hanging on a wall decorating a room, but are frequently neglected. However, this phrase does hold profound and valuable truth.

Families provide the foundation of society, through which our first encounters with the world around us take place and our understanding of our role and response is shaped. Because God created humanity out of love and designed us for the purpose of sharing love, families are meant to be full of love, care and guidance — just as Jesus experienced in the Holy Family. For this reason, our Catholic faith teaches us that, "... the family is the 'domestic church' where God's children learn to pray 'as the Church' and to persevere in prayer" (Catechism 2685).

I was blessed to be raised in a loving and stable family that strove to follow Christian teaching. From celebrating each other's accomplishments to praying and eating together for daily meals, we value love and family togetherness. However, it didn't take many years in my life to realize that so many others were being raised in different situations.