

# Gratitude to the Creation

It is a new day and you woke up happy this morning. The rising sun whisked you out of your bed and you joyfully obeyed it. You stood up and opened wide the window as a fresh, spring breeze brought to you the aroma of the morning. "Today is a new day! Today is a wonderful day!" you exclaimed. Yes, on a morning like this you can be thankful to be alive.

Each of you must have experienced such morning at least once in your life. We receive so many things from the creation, from the sunshine that warms us and the air we breathe, to the foods we eat for breakfast, to the lovely home that shelters us and the heating or air-conditioning that keep our bodies comfortable.

If we look around us, we see many realities that please us. Nevertheless, there are probably some realities that do not please us. For example, if we observe the situation of the creation today, we may feel disturbed. Mother Earth appears to be dying today, doesn't she? Some call it global warming but there could be a different explanation as well. The creation might be dying today because no one recognizes the gifts that the creation bestows upon them. Every day the creation gives something to humankind, but no one says, "Thank you." We just take and take and keep taking, day after day, while the creation is being depleted of its resources.

If the creation is dying, it means that there must be some relationship between what is happening and the people who are responsible for this situation. Could it be that people are dying also? If the people were alive, surely they would not only recognize that they themselves are alive but would also recognize what sustains them and keeps them alive – the creation. But if people are dying then surely they cannot

appreciate what is given to them because they are so busy fighting their sickness. Because of that self-preoccupation, they have little regard for the creation, which means they rarely say 'thank you' to the flowers, the plants, the air, and whatever surround them.

In fact, this century has been devastating for the earth. We take everything from the earth and then complain because it doesn't give enough. Rich countries extract resources from other countries. We dig many holes in the ground and still complain that the creation doesn't give us enough. The creation accepts to give of itself, maybe because it doesn't have a voice to complain like we do, but the problem is that we do not give it the love and recognition it needs to renew itself.

If we look at the laws of nature, we will realize that there has always been a concept of in and out. Therefore if human beings only take and do not give anything back to the creation, this means we are not following these laws. Regardless the earth continues to give us all its raw materials, it desperately needs our love and recognition to maintain and re-create itself. We as human beings know love is important because we are 'professional' to look for love in order to exist and to be happy. Drawing from this knowledge, human beings should know that the creation is also in need of love.

## The Miracle of Creation

Observing the creation, we can see that when we put one seed inside the soil it will create a plant. This plant can produce many flowers, and eventually an abundance of new seeds. Isn't this a miracle? Aren't we amazed that from one seed one hundred or more seeds can be produced? By using our logic we would say that if we put one seed in the soil it should produce only one new seed. But it is not like that! Therefore nature produces a miracle that we maybe don't like to recognize, but it does exist every day.

To understand the concept of the miracle of giving love by saying 'thank you', let us look at the relationships between human beings. When you give love

to someone else, you as the giver also feel love coming to you, especially when this person is grateful to you. And the more that person recognizes the love you give to him or her, the happier you feel, to the point that if you were sick, you would forget all about your sickness and if you were tired, you would suddenly revive.

This law also applies to the creation. Therefore if we are more grateful for what we receive from the creation, in the future the world can have enough fruit, even though there will be many more people on earth than at present. So far, the creation has never fulfilled its capacity, but if it receives more love it will give much more, maybe even go beyond its capacity, based upon that process of giving and responding. Today you see the opposite, because we take and we don't say 'thank you', therefore the creation gives less and less and less.

Human beings are not sensitive yet to perceive the suffering of the creation because they as well are suffering from many mysterious illnesses. I would portray this situation as human beings having minds that are always in confusion or in pain, having thirsty hearts, and having frail bodies, to the point that humans find it necessary to live with many doctors among them. As long as humans are in this kind of state, this tells us that unfortunately the creation will not be taken care of soon, at least until human beings re-establish the strength of their minds and learn to give water of life to their hearts in order to make their flesh healthy.

How can we stop these problems? Logically it is difficult to ask a sick person to take care of someone else beside himself. But based on the concept of the miracle of gratitude just introduced, the only way for a sick person to feel better is to take care of someone or something else. The point is that even though we are not completely healthy ourselves, we will get better by saying 'thank you' to the creation around us, for example by saying 'thank you' to a simple bouquet of flowers that we have just received and is now placed in a colorful vase in the middle of our living-room table.

Maybe you are going to say that just expressing 'thank you' will not change anything, and will not improve your life or the condition around you. But if you do not say thank you to the creation, what do you express instead? Most of the time you will probably say nothing, which means that you are indifferent to what exists around you. Surely this behavior also creates some kind of a miracle, but this time on the negative side, because it causes you to have a low energy within yourself. But let's say you could choose between creating a miracle that brings something positive or a miracle that brings negativity, which one would you prefer to create?

Maybe you feel you do not need to be grateful to the creation because you believe the creation that exists around you now existed long before you, without your contribution. But if you have this kind of thought you can develop an attitude that everything has to be immediately available to you, and if the creation does not fulfill this expectation, you will easily accuse it. Indeed, the quality of thankful thought is poor in most humans, who do call ourselves civilized.

## An Attitude of Demanding

The problem is that we look at the creation with the attitude that it 'must' give us the sun, the water and all the other resources that are there for our survival. And because we have developed this 'must' attitude toward the creation instead of being grateful to it, we are led to believe and to act as if we were the masters of the world.

This lack of gratefulness extends to other parts of our life as well. For example, at our workplace we may think that our colleagues 'must' fulfill what we ask of them, especially if they are in a subordinate position to us, or that our boss 'must' give us our salary. Then when we return home, we usually don't have some sudden conversion of attitude when we open the door. Instead, we continue with the same behavior of being the boss towards everyone and everything in the house, demanding they fulfill our every wish. If it is our spouse who opens

the door, we will demand something from him or her right away. We will have the same eyes toward our children, expecting them to serve us as well.

In time we will realize that the word 'must' has become an extension of our own personal attitude, to the point we will feel others should always do what we want, instead of being grateful for whatever they do for or give to us. This nature of demanding does not promote freedom, instead it creates totalitarian relationships where there is no room for any freedom or recognition.

Toward the creation as well, we demand to receive the best. For example, every farmer hopes that his crop will produce its best fruits and seeds for him. Gardeners hope the flowers will whisper, "I want to produce more blossoms for you," and fishermen hope the fishes will declare, "I will multiply more quickly for you." Perhaps the creation fulfills these things, and we may get the fruits or seeds we want, but if our attitude is demanding instead of grateful, can we receive love in this case? No, we don't feel love because we are stuck with this thought that everything 'must' exist for us.

If the creation could say something to us, we might hear it remark that it is not doing well. It might say, "If you appreciated me more, I would give you even more flowers, fruits and fish." Surely the plants must have questioned why they should multiply more since humans do not consider that multiplication as an act of love from the creation toward us. After yielding crops year after year without perceiving any gratefulness from humans, the creation might feel it is just a servant of people. And the more the farmers, the gardeners and the fishermen use the view of 'must', nothing will satisfy them, to the point the land might produce less and less for them, and eventually stop yielding anything.

Today we receive so many more things compared to what our ancestors received. But we still cannot say we are living on a planet of love. This is because of our attitude of demanding that things exist for us. By not saying 'thank you' we do not feel love from the creation because we have this 'must' attitude block-

ing our throat from receiving anything. Therefore the creation produces only according to the power of survival, not according to the power of love.

When we read the daily papers the news is full of reports of serious environmental issues. Maybe humankind cannot repair the damage already done, like the ozone depletion and the build-up of carbon gases. If there is no longer any oxygen, our lives will be finished. Yes, it looks like we are not going to die by the atomic bomb but because of lack of oxygen.

## Origin of the 'Must' Theory

Where does this theory—that everything 'must' come to us and if it does not we have the right to become angry—come from? Surely this theory did not come from the creation process itself because as we know every atom can only exist if it harmonizes with other atoms, which in turn eventually allows us, the humans, to also exist. Atoms of oxygen harmonize with atoms of hydrogen in order to form water, and so forth. This concept of giving and receiving on a molecular level is an inherent aspect of human beings' physical existence. Now, if human beings have the concept to just take and never give anything back, this is opposite to how the creation itself functions.

When we look more deeply, we will realize the theories, "It must come to me" or "Others must do it for me" or even, "I must do this for you", originate from us never wanting to serve or to please others. We do not like to give and we do not like to respond, but instead we only like to take and wait. And because we assume others are the same as us, we believe they also don't like to please, therefore we are going to force them to do something for us. The 'must' is everywhere because our basic attitude is that we don't like to do anything.

For example, you can see yourself acting with this expectation towards your car or any other material object, especially when it stops functioning properly. When your car does not start, will you say to your car, "Oh I am sorry, I forgot to thank you for all this time when you were working"? No, instead you will say,

“What is wrong with you, you are made to function as I want you to function. You do not have the right to stop working for me.” And perhaps that car will receive a strike from its owner.

Sometimes screaming and beating the car can help it to start, but because of your attitude, even though your car eventually does what you want, you surely will not receive any love from that relationship. You might obtain your objective, but you cannot receive the love that was inside the object. You will not receive any love either when tomorrow morning you eat a meal grumbling and demanding that the meal be cooked this way or that way. You can earn money at your job, but you won't feel any joy when you receive it. And if for some reason a person comes to help you with what you are doing and in the midst of his help you start to have a thought demanding that he must help you, you will also forfeit love. Even though the person accomplishes something for you, this demanding thought will prevent you from feeling anything from the one who freely came to help you. And surely over time this thought will affect your personality to the point that others will start to think of you as an unloving person.

Perhaps living this way you might get everything, but you will not receive any feeling for what you have. That is the big difference to saying 'thank you' for what you receive. Humans do not just have a flesh. You have a mind and you have a soul that needs to be filled up with love. If you receive something but you don't feel joy it means your soul is not happy. Your body might be happy, but not your soul. You need love to create yourself and maintain your soul beautifully.

What about the creation that is living around you and much of which is consumed by you? What do the flowers need? They need someone to pass by and say 'thank you' to them. That is what we teach our children to do, isn't it? Around age one or two we ask children to say 'thank you' because somehow we know it helps them to receive love.

If instead we are taught the word 'must', we will not receive love and we will soon find ourselves becoming angry. Using the attitude of 'must' means that we

will demand that someone open the door for us when we pass, or that a store must give us a good deal every time we visit it. And if we approach a governmental building, it will not be difficult to say, "Because you are the government you must give me money." This training may help us gain what we want, but does this teaching make us a person who can be approached by love?

## Approaching God and Receiving His Love

If we were educated in using the 'must' as a dominant way of approaching people or things, then on a different level, when we want to approach God, we will also begin by saying, "God, You must do this or that for me. If You are a good God, which I believe You are, You must do whatever I want." If God were not a good God, maybe we would not feel so free to use the word 'must' for Him. But because God has been presented to us as a good God who has love and the power to do anything, then surely this theory helps us to further develop the 'must' toward Him.

One question we therefore need to ask is, "Can we really receive love from God with this kind of attitude?" One thing is sure, if we behave in such a demanding way with someone we supposedly like, for example our partner, constantly asking him or her to do something, surely our partner will start to rebel against us over time. Feeling unrecognized, this person will ask, "Who do you think I am?" and eventually feel that we are not worthy to receive his or her love, regardless he or she will maybe continue to fulfill what we ask.



So if human beings object when someone treats them using the word 'must', how about the God of goodness? Can God send His love to someone who demands something from Him instead of asking humbly? Surely, according to the law of love, which exists where there is freedom, God cannot give His love



to such a person. That attitude of 'must' makes it absolutely impossible to have a relationship of love with God.

The reason we do not perceive an attitude of 'must' as inappropriate in a relationship of love is because we usually ask for things that are connected to matter. Therefore, most of the time the answer we look for is granted by people, not by God, like the demand to receive food or expecting to be paid. We can perhaps receive those things without being automatically rejected, yet without having learned the proper way to ask. But if God's intention was also to give His love when we receive something physically, surely this attitude of 'must' would be the first obstacle stopping His love.

If you reflect deeply upon what has been presented so far, you can realize everyone who lives around you is actually a gift. You are not the one who created people, you only live with people. Therefore if you want to create a new way of life, you will begin to say no one 'must' give you something and instead express gratitude for what you receive. If you think this way, then you are always in the position to please the deeper part of people, which is their soul, and at the same time please the invisible God of love. With this attitude, when you receive something from a human friend you will feel peace and other wonderful feelings. You live in a physical realm, but if you change your thought or perception you don't just receive the matter, but with it you receive the love of God. It is sad to see people receiving many physical things but never feeling love through these acts.

The moment we begin to be aware that our soul does not receive so much love in proportion to what our flesh receives, we can humble ourselves to the realization that our soul is actually empty of love. Only if we accept this realization (regardless it might not be what we expected to discover), and compare it with what we receive when we are grateful, can we begin to believe in the power of gratefulness. And if we practice words of gratefulness as the front page of

our dictionary of life, we will be able to receive the love of the universe through all our senses and fill our soul with love.

## A Tree with Many Leaves

When we keep grateful thoughts we are like a tree with many leaves, able to receive lots of sunlight, in other words, love. But when we refuse to be grateful, we are like a tree without any leaves at all, like a tree that always lives in the wintertime, never experiencing spring or summer. The more leaves the tree has, the more oxygen it can produce, and the more oxygen it has the more we humans can breathe and grow. Maybe we have never given much value to the leaves on trees but if tomorrow morning all the leaves were to disappear, we would surely understand that our planet is in grave danger.

So if we want to grow a healthy tree, we have to let it develop its leaves, which will also stimulate the sap to circulate more freely. In this sense, the more we as human beings keep the sense of being grateful, the more we will flourish and become exciting people. And the more exciting we become, the more life we will feel circulating inside our flesh. Through this excitement, our emotions will vibrate like harp strings, and only at that time will we feel that we are humans with hearts, whereas before we might not even have known this dimension of ourselves.

Contrary to that, when we cease to say 'thank you' it is like preventing ourselves from being able to receive oxygen. When the supply of oxygen is cut off, the destruction of harmony within the members of our body will start to take place, to the point eventually the whole body can break down. With this discovery we can understand why some people look flourishing and some do not. It is not because we are different species of 'trees', but because some of these 'trees' did not develop enough leaves, meaning we did not develop a specific mental viewpoint that would permit us to receive a lot of oxygen or love.

Externally everyone receives perhaps similar things as others do. For example, we all receive a salary from our boss for our work. But some may think: “Why should I thank my boss? I came here to work so I am entitled to receive the money and do not need to say ‘thank you’ to him.” However, if we choose a different way of thinking, for example, “I work for my boss, but he is not obliged to give me money,” and when we receive our salary we say ‘thank you’ to him, we will feel love coming inside of ourselves because we considered our salary as a gift and not as something that had to be given to us. Everything in life is meant to be received like that.

## Thanksgiving Tradition

Expressing thanks is the key to receiving love, for both us and for the creation. Of course, we can say that the flowers do not need any nourishment from human beings, because they already receive food from the soil. Yes, they are independent from us in a physical sense, but the flowers are still dying because humankind doesn’t consider that it is necessary to give our attention to them. If I ask if you need people to thank you for everything you give to them, you might respond, “Oh no, I do not need to hear anyone say ‘thank you’ to me.” But isn’t it painful when no one thanks you? Well, it is the same for the plants. It is not easy to produce crops when no one cares. But if we start to look at what the plants produce with appreciation, the plants will try to give us more than they do now, because the creation develops itself based on how we respond to it.

This is why in the past people chose a special day to express thanks to the creation, like the Thanksgiving tradition in America or the Harvest Festival in many other countries. After each harvest, people of the land offered the creation to God and gave thanks. And the creation responded to that and wanted to produce more or at least give crops again the next year. It is not by accident



that America is so fruitful. Actually, when you look at the soil of America, many parts are not so fertile, with stones and deserts in many states. And yet this nation has been blessed the most. Where did this miracle come from? America was blessed because the early settlers said 'thank you' to God and to the creation.

But nowadays do the farmers express their gratitude to the creation? Sometimes they do but not so often, and certainly not the same as they did before. And do you think people living in a city are used to saying 'thank you' to the sun and the air, or to their houses and to everything that surrounds them? Therefore the creation must no longer want to produce, to the point that we can see many parts of the planet begin to be affected by the behavior of the people living on it.

When we are not in harmony within our own selves, many things around us start to break down or disappear, like money, the car, the computer and so forth. And eventually our friends start to leave, or our partner shows up with the divorce papers. Therefore if we want everything to go well around us, first of all we need to fix ourselves. In other words, we have to make sure that we, as a tree, have leaves, that our sap is full of nourishment and that our roots are planted in fertile soil.

If we look in the Bible the passage in Romans 8:19 states that the creation is suffering: "The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed." This means that the creation is waiting for people who live by the energy of love. All the creation is waiting for us to develop our hearts, in the meantime supporting us and giving the best of what it has.

Therefore humans need to focus on giving and receiving love through having an attitude of gratitude, which will allow them to grow. If a plant cannot receive air, water and other nourishment, it will start to perish or become like a cactus. Similarly, if human beings do not receive love, perhaps over the years they will transform themselves from peaceful trees into cactuses. And when their souls

have become dry, perhaps they will want to conquer another country, eating everything clean to the point that there will be nothing left.

## God's Motivation for Creating

Then how do we gain the nourishment we need? If we observe and learn the theory of God, we will realize that God doesn't take or give by force. God didn't create the universe out of a feeling of duty. I believe God joyfully wanted to create the universe in His image. Therefore, if you choose the viewpoint of 'want to do' not 'must do', God will be happy to be a close friend to you and to give you His love. You will be living in a special way, which is being free to give and allowing others to be free to give also.

If you always want to give instead of thinking you 'must' give, you are going to remove your selfishness in the process. But if you do not, your attitude will be to command others. You will even command yourself, by saying you must achieve everything, although you feel it is too much to fulfill. And because you cannot fulfill, you will start to demand that others do something for you, in a totalitarian way.

So we need to learn a new theory, which is we 'want' to give something to others. If we grow the desire to give instead of demanding ourselves and others to give, we are going to fill up our soul and remove our 'hunger'. On the other hand, the law of wanting or forcing ourselves and others to give will make us lose everything, eventually even our physical life.

From this viewpoint, we can understand why Christianity as well as many other religious teachings instruct us to not demand anything from God, as such a conditional bargaining relationship with God is unacceptable. Yet many religious people pray to God with a list of all the things they want and they need. They ask God to fulfill many things for them. These possessive and totalitarian prayers do not place God above us but delegate God to a position underneath us.

If we put God underneath us, He will leave us and we will no longer be able to receive love from Him. As well, once God leaves from the people who demand from God and yet call themselves religious, many will leave the churches to be far away from them. This is one of the biggest reasons people abandon religion today.

Therefore, to make sure that we always put God above us we must check ourselves carefully when we speak to God. We should begin by saying, "Father, I want to give You something; I want to say thank You." Saying 'thank you' for what we have will allow God to give what He feels He wants to give to us. We don't need to say what we want, because God already gives us all we need.

When we are grateful we are learning to see how much we have and for some reason we no longer need so many things. That is the first miracle. The second miracle is that by saying 'thank you' to God, He can continue to give His love to us and that will transform our soul from a dry land into a wet, lush land. Our soul will be filled up and therefore we will want to give more to the ones around us. Through an attitude of gratefulness, love will automatically come inside of us and people will want to be with us. They will offer something to us sooner or later, because people want to give something in return when they feel love.

It is the same with the creation. The fruit trees will say, "I want to give you more fruit next time because you deserve it," or "My fruits will become bigger because your heart is bigger." They will want to produce more fruit because they will feel love from you. Overall, the creation will be so happy to be eaten by you and it will wish to multiply a thousand times. Then, because of that gift from the creation, the problem of world hunger will be solved.

## The Holiness of Christ

If you become a person who is continuously grateful for many things, surely one day others will come around and tell you that you are holy. And because they feel you are so holy, they will want to offer something to you. Following

this law of wanting to offer something to someone who is beautiful and bright, throughout the history of Christianity many people decided to give their lives to Jesus. If he were not so beautiful, it would be impossible for people to want to give their lives to him. Instead, they would just try to follow him. If Jesus were just a good man, people would receive his wisdom but carry on their lives separately from him. For someone to give his or her life for him, Jesus must have been absolutely made of gold or pearls or with the fabric of love.

Let us imagine that in his time Jesus changed his philosophy and started to tell the people that they had to respond to him, demanding that they believe in him and if they did not he would kill them. In that situation, I do not think God would give His love to Jesus for very long. And the people next to Jesus would want to run away as far as possible to another land, rather than wanting to be with him day and night, following him all over Israel, as they did.

People wanted to follow Jesus Christ because he was holy. But a big question is, why didn't all the religious people who gave their lives to Christ become like Christ? It must be that along the way these people demanded something for their needs rather than being grateful and seeking to give hope to Jesus. Despite the fact that they gave their lives for him, in the midst of that action they began to demand help from Jesus. Maybe they received the help they asked for, but they did not become like Christ. If we are looking for the attributes that bring us closest to Christ, we have to look at the nature of God. Unless we follow the way of gratitude, we will surely not attract people to us.

Many religious people forget that they are supposed to focus their efforts on how to become the recipients of God's love, in other words, how to become a vessel big enough to contain the liquid of God's love. Therefore, instead of worrying how to acquire things, it is better to worry how we can make ourselves beautiful so when God decides to give His love we can contain it. We want to be like a jar, not like a colander. Yet if we do not know or if we forget that this is the main reason we are on this earth, it will not be surprising that we find our-

selves declining without achieving our destiny to become containers of God's love. And if we cannot achieve our God-given destiny, eventually even the creation will want to abandon us and the flowers around us will refuse to bloom.

Jesus Christ said that the one who loves the Heavenly Father will inherit all of the creation. Matthew 6:33 states: "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." Surely this concept is the law for becoming the children of God. Therefore, if we want to become the children of God and inherit God's kingdom, we will have to follow this law with a humble heart.



When you pursue what I have just explained, you will become a person of love and people will want to revolve around you. Your family will want to live with you instead of wanting to separate from you. You will become like the sun, around which all the planets are happy to live. They will want to orbit around you instead of being like meteors lost in the solar system, hoping some planet will want to adopt them. Maybe the reason these meteors move around is because they have something within themselves that stops them from uniting with the law of the planets. This is what happens when we forget to love God. We feel that we are no longer a planet with a sun at the center but we become like meteors wandering alone in the vast solar system. At the same time, the more we continue to act this way, the more whatever is around us will start to collapse or it will separate itself from us.

If we do become meteors it is surely not God's fault. God made sure that every particle of matter in the universe understands the law of uniting with another particle in order to create something larger, eventually a planet, which in time will give birth to life. Therefore, if human beings accept that law and seek to work with others in harmony, they will receive love, and together they can build a kingdom where love reigns.



Our lives are easier than those of our grandparents, who worked so hard just to have dinner for their family each evening. In this sense, today so many miracles do come, and maybe because there are so many we are so used to them that we don't want to recognize them.

So let's learn from history. Let us learn from the early American settlers who showed their gratefulness to the creation. Their songs were filled with gratitude and love for God, and yet America was just a wilderness. But because of their grateful attitude America became the leading force of the world.

Even though the times have changed externally and the forefathers and foremothers seem far away in the annals of history, still the people of today should not take the road of indifference and the road of being the boss of everything, even to God. Instead, the citizens of this planet need to recognize what is given to them. Through that they can accomplish two things: to nourish their physical bodies with material nutrients, and to receive the nourishment of love for their spiritual bodies, which will together create harmonious personalities. If you rebel against being grateful, you will only receive the physical nourishment, but not the love. Therefore you will never stop complaining that nothing makes you happy, even though you have all your family and all the creation around you. When you complain, you push away the love that is directed toward you and you isolate yourself from others. That is a tragedy.

When you are in an environment new to your eyes, your ears, and your flesh, you are usually grateful, aren't you? The early English settlers who came to America were so grateful to this new land and to the Native Americans who came to help them, but what happened to the Native Americans later on? A few years later they were killed. Initially, the settlers were grateful because they were liberated from their former miserable life, but just after a few years they stopped being grateful to God and to the people around them. They

began to forget their deep desire and why they came to this land, which they many times called, a Promised Land. When they lost their gratefulness toward God and toward people, they developed their nature of complaint, to the point that they probably accused their new land and its citizens as the cause of their new misery.

If this happened to the people who believed in God and who wanted to create a new land where goodness would be the major focus, how about the ones who do not have such noble goals? Nothing will stop them from choosing the road of complaint instead of taking the road of gratefulness. This explains why many citizens of this country and the world eventually developed resentment toward God. If you are grateful about what you receive, you will receive God's love. And if you are not grateful, you will receive no love from the creation, from people, or from God.

We know that love has no specific form, but because of that, love can take on any form, just like the air. We can think that when we drink a glass of water, love has become that water. With this view, when our body needs water it is not just a glass of water that we are drinking but it is actually a glass of love we are giving to our body and soul. Surely this event is some kind of a mystery. Therefore, every time we receive something and say 'thank you', it is not just an object that we are receiving but it is love in the form of that object. If we keep this thought, even if we just imagine a glass of water or an ice cream cone, we will already feel love.

History shows us that many people on this planet must have believed that to ask God to help them was better than to be thankful to God for what they had. This attitude explains why this planet did not receive love, to the point that the creation itself is dying. Therefore, the only way to revive the creation is to recognize that it was given by God. God spent so much time creating many different forms so that we would not become tired of being grateful. And yet, in the world now, regardless we have more things than ever before, humankind still

feels a high demand for love. Love does not automatically pass through what we do or what we eat or what we touch. If we want to bring love inside ourselves, we absolutely need to be grateful all the time.

Love is not just in the food, it is all around us, for example, in beautiful surroundings. We need to learn to say 'thank you' to everything. And if we grow, we don't need to say 'thank you' for the same things, but for something deeper. Yes, based on the development of our conscience, we can now start to recognize love through people and eventually directly from the heart of God.

When a mother gives milk to her baby, she should be thinking, "When I give my milk I am giving love to my baby." Through this thought she not only nourishes her baby's body but also his or her soul. When you cook for others, you shouldn't just think you want to make good food, but you should want to invest your love in the food. If you go to a restaurant and someone roughly hands you the food, you become sick because there is no love in it. If no one invests love in each thing he or she does, automatically people become sicker and sicker, physically and spiritually. This is very real today as in other times in history.

Why do we feel we are dying? It is because no one wants to acknowledge what we receive from others. It is important to recognize both the physical person who gives something and the love inside. Religious people tend to not want to have anything to do with matter and accept to have only a small amount of material things. They believe that material things are created as obstacles to receiving love. Therefore, as a substitute for material things these people look for words, which they call the Word of God, believing that through intensely reading these words they can receive God's love.

Regardless of such a belief, do these people receive the love of God? Is it true that by rejecting matter we have more of a chance to be internal and therefore to receive more love? By reading a book and forgetting our surroundings do we become enlightened through the love of God? One thing is sure, if the

attitude of 'must' is always on the front page of our dictionary, we cannot receive any love from God, no matter how much we reject material things or how much we surround ourselves with holy books.

## The Promised Land

Many religious people speak about the Promised Land. But have they reached it or has the Promised Land become a dreamland and the hope of perfection fallen by the wayside? And by the end of their lives, many of these people will tell you that they no longer believe in a promised land or even in a dreamland.

We do not know that the reason we don't arrive to that Promised Land is because we stop being grateful for whatever we receive. Instead, people usually begin to rebel against the creation and demand many things from others, complaining to those working with them. By following this road, surely we turn our backs on God, accusing Him of abandoning us.

However, if God has a desire to see humankind become perfect, He surely must have provided the nourishment for that possibility. The tragedy is that when we lose our attitude of gratefulness, we die spiritually and God can no longer remind us that our destiny is to be perfect, like Jesus was.

So how can we make sure we are always moving in the direction toward the Promised Land? If I put this achievement in one word, it will be the word 'gratefulness.' Gratefulness about everything we learn, everything we receive. Please understand that with this attitude we will keep our eyes open to recognizing love in everything and therefore to receiving love. Only by saying 'thank you' can we perceive love and therefore we can enter the Promised Land. Then, for example, when we walk in a garden we will perceive everything as flowering with love. This means that we receive all the love stored in that garden.

# Cultivate Gratitude

To cultivate a viewpoint of gratitude, it is best to begin in childhood.

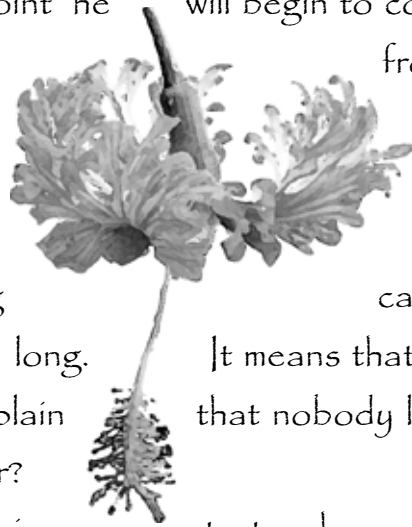
Somehow we know this and therefore adults always try to teach good things to their children, even though they themselves have difficulty to actually do what they teach. The first lesson they teach is to say 'thank you' for every little thing the child receives. They ask the child to say 'thank you' to mommy for the glass of milk, for the ladybug who sits down on the picnic table, etc., etc. But alas, this grateful attitude usually disappears over time. And when the children become adults, instead of continuing to develop a grateful mind, they have developed quite an opposite mind.

This opposite mind makes us become individualistic. We seek a way of life where we are not obliged to be grateful for each other and for what comes to us, to the point we prefer to not be with people so that we do not feel obliged to say 'thank you'. If we wish to avoid this individualistic destiny, we need to instead teach ourselves and our children to say 'thank you' everywhere. Even when we pay someone for what we bought at the grocery store, we should say 'thank you'. This is the way we should teach our children and the way we should act inside our soul.

If you say 'thank you' to people, will they feel bad or very good? Often no one says 'thank you' to the one doing his job, because we feel that the person is paid and therefore 'must' do his job. But if people were not paid, would we begin to say 'thank you' to them? It is still not sure, because there is something in us that does not want us to surrender to anyone. Every time we say 'thank you' to someone we are actually making ourselves 'under' that person for a short time. And because as a whole human beings do not like to surrender to anyone, I don't think it is easy for us to surrender to those who gives us something, regardless they are paid or not paid.

Why is it easier to learn to be grateful by beginning as a child to say 'thank you' everywhere? Somehow a child understands, maybe because of his size,

that he is in the position to be under his parents, and therefore he accepts to say 'thank you'. But as the same child grows up and starts to have the same height as his parents, he will no longer accept to be reminded to say 'thank you'. Instead, he will declare that because of his height he no longer has to say 'thank you'. From that point he will begin to complain and therefore he will no longer receive love from everything around him, because complaining is like putting a cork on top of a bottle. Once we seal a bottle, we can only use what is inside the bottle to quench our daily thirst. But how long can a person live upon one bottle of love? Not too long. It means that quickly that person is going to feel thirsty and complain that nobody loves him. Isn't this the echo we hear from a teenager?



Therefore it is wise to teach our children no matter what age or height to say 'thank you' to their mother, their father and their schoolteachers, to whoever gives them something. Then they can continue to receive love inside their bottle, or their soul. We need to teach them this, and ourselves, of course, too. If we are determined to say 'thank you' over and over, God's love will not pass us by, but will instead come inside our open door. Obedience to being grateful will make our soul become beautiful. In this sense, it is not from hearing a beautiful speech that we become a good person, but because we are grateful to hear a beautiful speech we become a good and beautiful person. The more our mind is grateful, the more our eyes can see what is around us. And the more we see what is living around us, the more we are able to perceive love and therefore to receive love.

If you do something for others, never say "I must" because there is no love inside your actions. Rather say "I want to serve you" and then God's love can come through you. Externally, you do the same actions, but your feelings change step by step. It takes many years, but you become a different human

being. If you take care of children because you 'must' be a parent, it quickly becomes boring. As soon as you use the language of 'must' you will find your feelings disappearing and you will just perform physical actions. You can recall everything you did, but there is no feeling associated with it. You don't feel you are growing, you don't feel love. The fact is that you will only feel love when you want to do something for someone and when you say 'thank you'.

Perhaps when someone gives you water on a day you are really thirsty, you are so grateful to that person. But if you are not so thirsty, you usually don't say 'thank you'. It is only when you are at the end of your rope you begin to say 'thank you'. But you can learn to receive love without waiting until you are desperate. You don't need to suffer to remind yourself to say 'thank you'. You should understand that you must always continue to stay grateful. That is the key to receiving the love that is all around you.

## Everything is a Gift

From now on do not think people must give you something. Rather say, "I am so grateful" when someone gives you something. As you do so, you receive love and at the same time the giver receives love. And even if you don't receive anything from anyone, you can still say 'thank you' to Heavenly Father, because at least you have your life. There is always something to be grateful for.

We must fight this force that is trying to stop us from recognizing what others give to us, or stop us from identifying these events as special. This force might say, "Do not say 'thank you'. Others must thank you first."

From now on you need to think, everything is a gift. For example, water is a gift. The creation doesn't need to give you water, it wants to. Everything was made by God as a gift for us. God wanted to create the world, He didn't feel He 'must' create the world. Therefore as His children we should start whatever we do with the viewpoint of "I want to do this, I want to become a good person," which is also God's desire for each of us.

Children who live in a grateful atmosphere will naturally teach others to think the same way. Surely the child born from grateful parents will be more enthusiastic than the one who was born as an unwanted child. Unwanted children need to fight within themselves to find value and to control the call of despair. We have to acknowledge that what makes a child different from another child is the environment in which the seed was planted. Based on what land the child grew from, or what seed he came from, it will be more or less difficult for him to achieve a destiny of goodness and loveliness.

And if one day your child comes and says, "Mommy, I want to help you," this will really melt your heart. It is not important how well he will do it, but that he wants to help. If your child wants to help, this is really a miracle. In that moment the child opens his whole being and therefore God can give His love to him. The child will be happy and mommy is also happy in that moment. But the one who will be the most surprised will be the child himself because he discovers the happiness of giving.

The more we continue to practice gratefulness, the better our personality will become, which is not only good for ourselves but for the ones who are living with us. In turn, those living around us will feel the desire to say 'thank you' to us not just to be polite but because we have become so beautiful. Our spouse will feel that he or she will want to serve us without feeling obliged to do so. But until that day comes we have to work really hard.



This secret of how human beings can become beautiful was somehow buried in the sand, and instead people began to feel that it was better to forget to be grateful and to strive only to get what they wanted. But from now on, no matter what our age, let's not lose time any longer, because we have to grow to maturity before we move on to another world. We can feel happy and breathe love from the moment we decide to educate our mind to be grateful about what we touch with our hands, perceive with



our eyes, or hear with our ears. Yes, regardless of our age, we should consider this an emergency and begin now.

When we are young we have a lot of energy and we feel that we can survive in any place and under any conditions. But it is not a question of survival, it is a question of knowing how to live with God in this world as well as in the next. So far, living in this world looks like a battle for survival, but if we continue this way, how long can the earth support us? Maybe it is better to think that we are going to die tomorrow in order to give us pressure to be grateful every day for what we have. And if you are still young, tell yourself to not wait until you are sixty to begin to appreciate things. It is too late to practice then, especially if during your whole life you used the word 'must' toward yourself and others.

If you want to stand securely on God's side from the depth of your being, you will have to first remove the 'must' from your vocabulary list, and begin to be grateful to whatever is around you. In this way, you will become the lord of Creation, and you will be able to guide any child born from you to be on God's side, as well.

Therefore, let us challenge ourselves to see how many times we can recognize the love coming to us. How about when people smile at us? Isn't this love? How many people smiled at us during our lives or even just today? Please respond to that love, recognize it and smile back. It is a small detail, but it is the way to become good, like God is good.

The more we say 'thank you' to even the smallest of details around our life, the more we can recognize love everywhere, the less God will be sorry to have created humankind, and instead will rejoice to have created such beautiful, loving children.