

Chapter 4: We Give Thanks to God



Introduction

You have probably been told that people with good manners say “please” and “thank you.” Saying thank you is a way of showing your gratitude and respect to other people. Doesn’t it feel good when someone thanks you?

It is just as important for us to say thank you to God. It helps us to focus on the good things God has given us. Can you think of a person who is very thankful to God for what they have? Have you noticed that this person is also a joyful and happy person? Showing our gratitude and respect to God is key to a joyful life.

Scripture Story: Thank God for All He Has Done for You

Saint Paul reminded the first Christians how important it is to give thanks to God. Let’s read from one of Saint Paul’s letters:

The peace that Christ gives is to guide you in the decisions you make; for it is to this peace that God has called you together in the one

body. And be thankful. Christ’s message in all its richness must live in your hearts. Teach and instruct one another with all wisdom. Sing psalms, hymns, and sacred songs; sing to God with thanksgiving in your hearts. Everything you do or say, then, should be done in the name of the Lord Jesus, as you give thanks through him to God the Father. (Colossians 3:15–17)

In this passage, Saint Paul uses a form of the word *thanks* three times: *thankful*, *thanksgiving*, and *thanks*. He is reminding us to say thank you to God every day. Our family, our friends, our food, our homes, our pets, our toys are all gifts from God. When we say thank you to God, we remember that all these good things come from him.

Thankful people are happy people. They are pleased with what God has given them. Some people do not appreciate what they have been given by God. They are not thankful or happy. We have a choice: to focus on the good things in our life or to focus on the bad things. Which would you rather focus on?

Giving Thanks to God

There are so many reasons to say thank you to God every day. We can thank him for creating the beauty of the world. We can thank him for the times people are kind to us. We can thank him for the love of our family and friends. We can thank him for helping us through hard times.

Giving thanks to God is so important that it is a key form of prayer. There are prayers of thanksgiving throughout the Bible. Almost every time Catholics gather for official public prayer—called the liturgy—we thank God. We adore and bless God for all his blessings. We are especially thankful for the gift of his Son, Jesus Christ, and his saving work. We also thank God for adopting us as his children, through the Holy Spirit.

But we don't have to wait until Church to give thanks to God. We can say, "Thank you, God," whenever something good happens in our life. This will help us be grateful and see all of the good things God gives us.

God's Treasure of the Eucharist

Do you remember the Ten Commandments that God gives us in the Bible? The Third Commandment says: "Remember to keep holy the Lord's Day." Sunday is the Lord's Day—a special day to honor and thank God. It is a day of joy and rest from work. It is the day Jesus rose from the dead, so we celebrate his Resurrection every Sunday at Mass.

Here's something important to remember. The word *Eucharist* means "thanksgiving." During the Mass, we pray, giving thanks and praise to God. Praising God with music also helps us to worship God. We thank God for all of the blessings he has given us, and we thank him that Jesus is with us. We especially thank Jesus for his sacrifice on the cross and the gift of his Body and Blood.

Here are some of the ways we give thanks and praise during the Mass:

- During the Introductory Rites, we sing or say a prayer called the Gloria. One of the lines of the prayers is "We give you thanks for your great glory" (*Roman Missal*, page 522).
- During the Liturgy of the Word, we sing or say a prayer called the Responsorial Psalm. The psalms are prayers from the Old Testament. They often give praise and thanksgiving to God.
- During the Liturgy of the Eucharist, the priest leads a long prayer called the **Eucharistic Prayer**. At the beginning of the prayer, the priest says, "Let us give thanks to the Lord our God," and the people respond, "It is right and just" (*Roman Missal*, page 531). The rest of the prayer gives praise and thanks to God.

Another way we show our gratitude to God is through the gestures of respect we practice during the Mass:

- We make the Sign of the Cross with holy water when we enter the Church.
- We **genuflect** on one knee when we enter or leave Church.
- We stand during the reading of the Gospel to show how important it is.
- We kneel during the Eucharistic Prayer to show our respect for the sacrifice of Jesus.

Things to Remember

- It is important to express our gratitude and thankfulness to God.
- Sunday is a special day to honor and thank God for all the good things he has given us, especially for the gift of Jesus his Son.
- The word *Eucharist* means "thanksgiving."
- During the Mass, we give thanks and praise to God through many different prayers, gestures, and **hymns**.