

## Challenge #2 Cultivate Gratitude



# Teaching the Way of Love

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### PLEASE PRAY THAT

- Parents will find ways to show their children gratitude
- Children will be blessings to their family, especially their parents.
- Children will be a sign of trust and hope in the world.
- Young people may have the courage to forge life-long, faithful commitments.
- We may all see the Catholic Church be ever more faithful and credible.
- Truth, justice and mercy will flourish in the world.
- All parents will be able to earn the bread they need to sustain their family.

## The Great Attitude of Gratitude

November signals so many events; daylight savings time, hunting season, football playoffs, Thanksgiving, Black Friday shopping, the first snow... Why is it that some people look at the eleventh month of the year with eager anticipation while others see nothing more than the arrival of winter with its cold and darkness? The answer can be found in one's ability to be grateful.



Gratitude is defined as a feeling of thankfulness or appreciation for something or someone. Robert Emmons, a professor of psychology at UC Davis who has studied gratitude for years has found that gratitude has two key components. First, it is the affirmation that there is good in our life and world. Secondly, gratitude is the recognition that the sources of this goodness exists outside of us. In other words, someone else is giving us gifts and talents that help achieve goodness and joy in our lives.

What happens to us when we practice gratitude? Gratitude makes us happier and more satisfied with life. We experience less anxiety and depression. We take fewer sick days and are less bothered by aches and pains. Grateful people sleep better, are more resilient, are not greedy and perform better at work or at school! In a nutshell, people who cultivate an attitude of gratitude are rewarded with contentment and joy.

My grandmother, Bertha, reaped the benefits of gratitude in her life. She lived an incredibly long time: almost 107 years. She would be the first to tell you that a grateful attitude helps you through the hard stuff and adds joy to the good. She remained sound of mind and body up until 105. It wasn't until the last year and one half that her memory dimmed often causing her to forget who we were. Despite the lack of recognition, she *would always* say thank you for visiting and ask us to come again. Her heart was grateful right up to its last beat.

*Because humanity passes by way of the family...*

The habit of gratitude increases the greater good in life. It transforms your perception to see everything in life as a gift. Instead of waking in the morning dreading the day, gratitude allows you to be open to the God of surprises who delights in your awakening. Gratitude permits your heart to sing; “Give thanks to the Lord who is good, whose love endures forever!” (Psalm 107:1) It gives you permission to find joy in your ordinary day.

Imagine what might happen in your home or workplace if you decide to nurture a thankful spirit. What impact might you have on your spouse, your children or your co-workers if you started to collect reasons for gratitude each day? How could your thankfulness brighten someone else’s day? What might happen if you took time each day to recognize that every good and perfect gift comes from God?

## Here is your November Challenge

**Cultivating an attitude of gratitude** is probably the best way to face the cold and dark time of the year. And that is what this month’s challenge is all about. Go to the Teaching the Way of Love website at [www.twl4parents.com](http://www.twl4parents.com) and download the *Cultivate a Grateful Heart* worksheet. There are three parts to the gratitude challenge.

**Step One: Be Aware.** Set aside time each day to recall the blessings that you have received. Some may be small (enough milk for your breakfast cereal) others may be surprising (no red lights driving to work) and others amazing (finding \$50 in a coat pocket). No matter the size, write them down.

**Step Two: Dare to increase someone else’s gratitude.** Who are the people in your life that you spend the most time with? Write something that you can do to make them experience more gratitude each day for the next three weeks. (Examples: being more present to a family member, not interrupting someone when they are talking, greeting a co-worker with a smile each day, being on time, picking up your dirty clothes, being patient...)

**Step Three: Share your thanks.** Slow up your pace over the next three weeks and pay attention to the people in your life who are making your life better. Stop, look them in the eye and say thank you to them. In addition, memorize some bible passages on gratitude.



Are you ready to meet this month’s challenge? Give it a try! You’ll find that this activity not only improves attitudes toward chores, but also improves the sense of true community within your family. This challenge is just a small part of good Catholic parenting. Visit [www.twl4parents.com](http://www.twl4parents.com) for more strategies that will help you become the best parent you can be. And for the best systematic approach to parenting, consider purchasing the Teaching the Way of Love program, which can be found at the same website.

This article series is brought to you by Alice Heinzen and Jeff Arrowood, authors of the Teaching the Way of Love home study series for parents. Find out more at [www.twl4parents.com/teaching-the-way-of-love](http://www.twl4parents.com/teaching-the-way-of-love).