



Gratitude in a Time of Drought

Norann Voll

People who love me have, from time to time, called me Pollyanna. It's not my favourite nickname, but I'll admit I generally regard myself as a reasonably buoyant, positive person whose mood doesn't entirely hinge on circumstance. Several years ago, though, I found myself stuck in a place of deep sadness.

Honestly, I'm not entirely sure how I got there. It was new and terrifying territory for me, especially as all my old methods of recovering balance and fortitude didn't seem to work. I found myself unable to will, or pray, my way out of the dark. Then, on one particularly grim day, my husband, Chris, said, "Just write down one thing. Write down one thing that you are thankful for."

I did.

I still remember what it was. And I am still grateful for that one thing today, and even more grateful for that advice.

"The way the sunlight falls on my morning coffee." That is what I wrote. If you feel an eye roll coming on, I totally get it – but understand that for right then, in that one moment, those words and what they represented were enough.

Finding that one simple thing to give thanks for, and writing it down, started a chain reaction. I found another, and another. I wrote each one down, in a numbered list. I began, inch by inch, to move away from the void and into a place of relative OK-ness, then hope, and finally joy.

Gratitude, celebration, giving thanks – even for the smallest of gifts – became a new way of living for me, a kind of oxygen I couldn't get enough of, a transformative way of being. I filled my first "gratitude journal," and kept going.

And now, as most of the state of New South Wales, where I live, and large parts of Queensland and South Australia enter a second, crippling year of drought, and the biblical command to "give thanks in all circumstances" (1 Thess. 5:18) sometimes clangs off-key, I find myself getting another unexpected lesson in thankfulness.

During recent travels, three different believers asked me in three separate conversations if my church-community was feeling inspired, blessed, and excited to be the visible hands and feet of Jesus to those around us in these trying days.

Inspired. Blessed. Excited. In each of the conversations, those specific words were uttered. The first time, they had me chuckling nervously because, yes, we have been reaching out often and with intentionality to friends and neighbors. But by the second and third conversation I was ready for some soul-searching:

Inspired? Blessed? Excited?

Umm ... Maybe not *those* emotions, at least not quite yet.

But those are, indeed, the right questions to ask. Here we are, a body of believers, placed right in the center of a slow-moving disaster. It is no annoying accident, but rather a God-given opportunity to love, care, support, and travel alongside those who are really doing it tough.

It is true that the remaining grass in our pastures is brittle and dry, and months ago we had to sell most of the cattle. Trees we planted and tended over the past decade are struggling, and we've lost plenty. We're paying to truck in drinking water from town; our usual source is rain, plumbed from our gutters into collection tanks.

The outlook is dire. We're heading into the hottest months of the year, and there's no talk of an end to the drought, which is breaking records for all the wrong reasons.

St Mary's
Parish
Haddington
Road

Serving
the
Community

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Family

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Child Protection: <http://www.stmaryshaddingtonroad.ie/ministries/child-protection/> also www.csp.dublindiocese.ie

Streaming also at www.churchservices.tv/haddingtonroad

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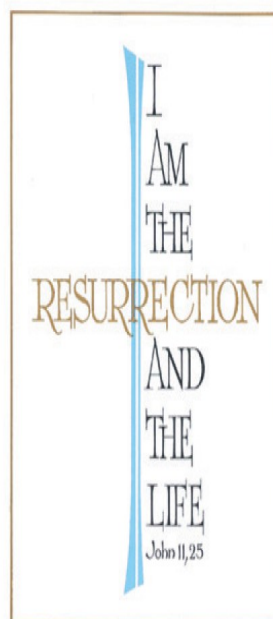
Yet still I can't bring myself to say we are deprived. For right now, we have everything we need to live: A roof overhead, safety and security, for starters. Our wells continue to provide reliable quantities of water, which, while not potable, helps us to grow food in abundance, including bumper apple, orange, and grape harvests, and vegetables galore. Our sign-making enterprise provides our community with shared work and generates the resources we need, and the means to reach out to our neighbours.

Most importantly, we have the love of Jesus, our Master who reminds us to reject worry, "for tomorrow will worry about itself" (Matt. 6:25-34). And we have each other. Included in "each other" are many other believers and congregations who pray for us daily and support us in practical ways.

So when I choose to view our current circumstances from a position of appreciation, there is nothing to do but give thanks and get to work. I could choose to dwell on what we lack, such as green grass, but doesn't God hear our grumbling as well as our gratitude? Because what is the fact the lawn outside my house is reduced to dirt, when compared to the reality for farmers I know whose entire livelihood is in shambles, and whose mental health is pushed to breaking point?

I have learned that living from a place of gratitude allows the needs of others to stand out above your own. It creates a place to work from, a solid bedrock for daily life, a backdrop for life's most unexpected nastiness, and a powerful way to combat discouragement.

Certainly, gratitude is not always the easiest starting point. It's a thing to train for and work for, but it is worth pursuing, because – like manna in the wilderness – it will always turn what we have in this moment into enough for today.



Mass for the Deceased

**Sunday 3 November,
11am**

The Annual Mass is being offered for all who died from the Parish of St. Mary's during the year. A candle will be lit for each of the deceased and placed on the altar.

There will be refreshments after mass and all visitors are welcome

IN MEMORIAM

11am: William and Christine Curran (Anniversary)

Brian J O'Connor KM (Anniversary)

Jim Dufficy (Anniversary)

Masses on 2nd /3rd October 2019

6pm: Kevin and Pat Kelleher (Anniversary)

9.30am: Edward Dempsey, Mary McInerney and
Peter Dowley (Anniversary)

5pm: Cathal Daly (Anniversary)

Parish Autumn Schedule 2019

Friday 1 November: Feast of All Saints masses 10am & 12.40

Saturday 2 November: All Souls 10pm mass

Requiem Mass: Order of Malta: 11:30am

Sunday 3 November: Mass for the Deceased: 11:00am

Saturday 9 November: Remembrance Mass: Great War Memorial: 10:00am

Remembrance Concert: Adult Lassus Choir
Conductor: Ite O'Donovan: 7:30pm

Masses and Confession

Sundays: Vigil, 6pm (Saturday), 9.30am, 11am, 5pm

Croatian Community Mass 6.30pm

Messe en français 12.30 (2^e et 4^e dimanche du mois)

Daily masses 10am and 12.40pm, Saturday 10am only

-Rosary daily after 10am mass

Adoration Blessed Sacrament, Weds 10.30-12.40

LAST WEEK'S COLLECTIONS

1st Collection: €1,036

2nd Collection: €2,035 (Missions)

Weekday collections: €840 (2 weeks)

THANK YOU