

## Reaching Beyond Gratitude

The poet and chronicler of transformation Jan Frazier writes, “What do I want for myself? I want to learn to pare from my consciousness all that is not gratitude. I want to cease praying for anything I do not already have, but pray only to say thank you, and pray to learn how to hold more gratitude.”

It’s easy to say “thank you.” My life throws out innumerable opportunities to be thankful: for my wonderful wife Katharyn, for our close friends, for this faith community, for Elea, for this quirky and enduring village, for our old and comfortable and character-filled house, for Emily our standoffish and loving cat, for our wood stove, for natural gas, for sidewalks, for the Black Angus who graze Gibbet Hill, for the coyotes who howl in the wetlands, for the local gang of crows who own this neighborhood and let us live here on sufferance.

It’s easy to say “thank you” for these things I love. But if I only express gratitude for what I love, then gratitude conceals a subtle trap: for in every thought of gratitude is the germ of its opposite: a sense of relief that I am not living what I do not want.

So I try to reach beyond gratitude to find appreciation — love for all the variety in this wild and holy world. We are all consciousness. The people; our beloved domestic creatures; the wild beasts; the plants. In the Talmud it is written, “Every blade of grass has an angel bending over it whispering, ‘Grow, grow!’” Not only the blades of grass, but the soil and the minerals and the air; the cells, the molecules, each atom, each neutron, each quark, each supersymmetric string and quantum loop. We are all consciousness. As the writer Annie Dillard puts it, “Holiness lies spread and borne over the surface of time and stuff like color.”

I light the chalice today in thankfulness — in gratitude — in appreciation not only that we all get to play in this manifold of infinite possibility; but also that we all get to create it as we go along, seeding its probabilities with our intention.

— Keith Dawson, March 2010