

## RELIGION

# Contemplating gratitude and faith

*“Let gratitude be the pillow upon which you kneel to say your nightly prayers, and let faith be the bridge you build to overcome evil and welcome good.” -Maya Angelou*

I spoke to a friend. She was like me. She grew up in the South with a mom who drilled into her the importance of sending a “Thank You” note for every gift given.

I sometimes struggle to find the time to sit down and write a note, and as I get older it is hard to write with this new stiffness in my hands. But I know how nice it is to receive a handwritten note of thanks or en-



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couragement or welcome. My children, now grown, tell me, “Mom, send me a card. I love to get something in my mail box.” Usually they stay in touch by text or email, but it is not the same. I love to get a note and I save every one that I receive.

My friend told me that she got a beautiful card from someone that had “Thanks” written across the front in large letters. It turned out to be a thank you note for a thank you note. She asked me, “Do I write a thank you for a thank you to a thank you?” I think that might be going a little too far. However, whether we write notes or not, gratitude is important. I think it is a life changer, an attitude that can actually transform our world!

Diana Butler Bass looked at several studies on gratitude before writing her book, “Grateful.” The question was asked,

“How often do you feel a strong sense of gratitude or thankfulness? Would you say at least once a week, once or twice a month, several times a year, seldom or never?” Seventy-eight percent of Americans said, “Once a week,” but Bass said she thought that wasn’t really true. She said sometimes people answer a question the way they think they should answer it, not the way they really feel. She thought our culture really feels very negative these days.

All I know is that a part of being people of faith is being grateful, being able to see the

good in everything. In the letter of I Thessalonians 5: 28 (KJV) we are reminded that “In everything give thanks.” The tough part is “in everything.”

When Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer was in prison during WWII, he said that even in the situation in which he found himself, he experienced gratitude, a sense of humility and dependence on the gifts of others, more profoundly than ever before. He wrote, “In normal life one is not at all aware that we always receive infinitely more than we give, and that gratitude is what enriches life.” In his book, “The Cost of

Discipleship.” I choose to be grateful and to let my faith be the bridge I build to overcome evil and welcome good. After all there is a lot to be grateful for. It is spring with flowers blooming and trees budding and summer is finally on the way. We live in a small community where people care about each other. And we have a God who loves us, who will always be with us, in everything! So I hope we can all feel the transformative power of giving thanks.