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A little girl was going to a party and her mother told her to be a good girl and to remember, when she was leaving, to thank her hostess. When she arrived home the mother asked if she had thanked her hostess and the little girl replied: 'No' because the girl in front of me did, and the lady said, 'Don't mention it' – so I didn't

Could it be said of us that we don't mention those magic words 'thank you' not nearly enough. Jesus, the Jew, praised the Samaritan leper who came back to say 'thanks' for his healing. Samaritans and Jews were always at loggerheads. But words of gratitude are part and parcel of the language of love which trumps our differences.

As a Christian, a spirit of thankfulness should characterise our whole way of seeing the world. It appears to me that people with little of the world's resources are often far more appreciative than those who have plenty.

It often amazes me when I see the smiling happy faces of children in other parts of the world who may live in shanty towns and have scarcely enough to eat. St Philip Neri once said: "I cried because I had no shoes until I saw a man without any feet."

One little boy from a war weary country recently, when asked what he wanted to be when he grew up, shouted – "ALIVE". Do we thank God for the number of times in our lives when we've cheated death? I can think of at least three occasions in mine.

Life itself is a gift and this awareness should greatly influence the way we live it. This especially applies to life in the womb.

How many times do we thank God for the gift of life which our parents have given us and nurtured? Today sadly for many that is not a given. Life is precious. At the moment we were conceived, God implanted in us an immortal soul so that we could share forever in His life.

And what about the precious gift of fertility. Secondary school kids these days are often taught how to protect themselves and how **not to have children** as if fertility were a disease and not God's gift to us. God made a mistake in the way he designed our bodies and we have to correct His mistake. When the fertility switch is deliberately turned off for a stretch it doesn't always switch itself on again when we want it to.

In the baptismal ceremony whilst praying over the mother the priest says: "she now thanks God for the gift of her child, may she be one with him or her in thanking God forever in Heaven". That's what it's all about, not giving the young a negative attitude towards fertility but seeing it as God's gift to humanity for husband and wife to bring new life into the world. That's something to celebrate and be really thankful for.

Eucharist means praise and thanksgiving so when we come together for Mass there is no better time for thanking God for his many gifts to us, not least the gift of human life but even more so the gift of Eternal Life which his Son, Jesus won for us on the Cross and which we look forward to share in perpetually.