This autumn season of fullness and gratitude circles around again, inviting me to slow down, to take time to look at all that life graces me with at this moment. When I gentle down my pace and appreciate all that life holds, I stop thinking I need more and racing to get more. More things, more love, more affirmation.

When I begin the day with appreciation of life, not taking this new day of life on Earth for granted, but experiencing the wonder of my very existence, something happens within me. My heart expands from appreciation to gratitude. What a great way to walk into the work and challenges of a given day.

Each time I focus on all that is most important in life, my caring relationships with family and friends, my being part of other circles of care, my ability to reach out and make a difference in the lives of others, how can I not be grateful?

But life is heartbreaking, too. For all of us. The loss of those who have been a joy in life cuts so deep into our hearts that we wondered how we could carry on. And we do, but we are never quite the same. With time, help, and support we may grow into a graced feeling in our heart where the loss is mixed with deep gratitude. Merton said it well, “in the end we will weep, not for what we have lost, but for all that we have been given.”

I join with so many others who name faith in God as the gift that grounds our lives. We know the joy of realizing we are of God, part of a larger life than simply our own, knowing we are immersed in God’s Presence and never alone. We are called by God’s Spirit to do all we can to make God’s dream for this world a reality in our time and place. Called and entrusted with a mission that shapes our lives. So much to be grateful for!

Reflecting on all that life holds at this moment, I offer a simple prayer of thanks to God, the Source of all, knowing in a new way the wisdom of Meister Eckhart’s words, “If the only prayer you ever say is ‘Thank You’ that is enough.”