



## Gratitude on Thanksgiving November 23, 2021

Dear Member of the JustFaith Network,

We are grateful that you are a part of our JustFaith community. Whether you are a graduate of one of our programs or you are just getting to know us, we hope this offering will help sustain you spiritually and equip you to work for justice.

Our bi-monthly resources are sent the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesdays of each month; you can access an archive of past resources by logging into your JustFaith account. You can use these resources for personal reflection, or you can invite your friends, family, Sunday School class, or current or past JFM small group to join you in-person or via video conferencing. If you are new to video conferencing, Zoom tutorials are available on our YouTube page – [Click here to access.](#)

While we hope that these twice-monthly resources will inspire and sustain your community while distancing, now is also the perfect time to start one of our regular programs. Click [here](#) for more information.

Note: If you're using this resource with a group, the assumption is that you will share your screen for all to watch a 5-minute video together. If you are not able to share your screen, you might want to ask people to watch the video in advance; you can find it [here](#).

Last but not least, all of our work is a collaboration with people like you. When you donate, your gift helps us sustain and equip individuals committed to making the world better. [Click here to help out.](#) Also, please feel free to forward this resource to friends and family!

With gratitude,

The JustFaith Ministries Staff



## Welcome and Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

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When everyone has dialed in, begin your time together with these or similar words:

Welcome, friends! It's so good to be with all of you. Today we'll begin with an opening prayer and spend a few minutes checking in with each other. Then we'll have some conversation a video we'll watch together, before closing in prayer. Most importantly, though, this will be a time to care for one another and to be the community we're called to be.

Let's take a few seconds of silence to pause, to listen to our breathing, and to be present in this space.

*Pause for 30 seconds before beginning the opening prayer. In advance, assign someone to read aloud the following prayer:*

### **An Awakening**

**It begins when you open your eyes in the morning.  
It happened!  
It really happened! The single most marvelous thing happened!  
When you went to bed the night before, you couldn't be sure.  
But here it is! Nothing is better! Nothing more precious!  
Hallelujah! Thank you, Lord!**

**I woke up!**

**Yes, I woke up for another day.  
Another day of living.  
Another day of a thousand gifts.  
The feeling of a warm shower on a chilly morning,  
The sight of a smile, the feel of a hug.  
The taste of coffee and blueberry pancakes.  
The pleasure of thinking thoughts and imagining the day before me.**

**Yes, I woke up!**

**Praise God, from whom all blessings flow.  
Praise God, all creatures here below.**

**Oh my!  
Amen.**



## Check-In Time (10 minutes or so)

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Ask these open-ended questions. If you are by yourself, journal about them.

*Note: If you are with a group, these questions have the potential to take up a lot of time. Some weeks may require more check-in time than others, depending on the needs of the group. To provide a shorter yet meaningful check-in time, choose ONE of the questions below, and ask participants to share a ONE sentence response.*

- **Before we begin this our reflection, let's take a few minutes to check in. How is everyone feeling?** (It will be a bit more difficult via phone to know if someone is being talked over or is trying to get a word in.... Be sure everyone has a chance to speak).
- **What is something you're struggling with this week?**
- **Where have you seen a sign of hope this week?**

*Other optional questions include: What is something you've learned about yourself during this time of social distancing? Where have you experienced a "thin place" in the last week? Where have you seen beauty this week? What is one new behavior you'd like to continue doing when the virus has passed us by?*

## Reflection (25 minutes or so)

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Watch this five-minute video together: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zSt7k\\_q\\_qRU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zSt7k_q_qRU)

Invite responses to a few (not all) of these questions:

1. **What was your experience watching the video?**
2. **The narrator suggests we live today "as if it were the first and last day of our lives." What would you do today if you knew it were your last day?**
3. **How do you practice or cultivate gratitude in your own life?**
4. **What distracts you?**
5. **In an typical day, what do you find yourself most grateful for?**
6. **Gratitude and generosity are sometimes considered spiritual sisters. Is this your experience?**
7. **Share anything you'd like in response to watching the video.**



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## Announcements (5-10 minutes)

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- This resource is a small sample of the kinds of conversations had in our 8-session programs. For a more intensive experience, click [here](#). Also, we just released a new program on civil dialogue entitled “Want to Talk?” See our website for details.
- On Thursday, December 16, 7:00 p.m. ET, JustFaith Ministries’ “Acting for Justice” Series will continue with author and global activist, Marie Dennis. Marie will address how nonviolence is trying to make its way into the core of Catholic teaching. You can register [here](#).
- Let participants know that the materials for this gathering were free, put together by the JustFaith Ministries staff to equip more people for the work of peace and justice. To support the creation of more resources and programs, participants are encouraged to donate to JustFaith Ministries through [justfaith.org](http://justfaith.org).
- Are there any opportunities for action or advocacy happening in your community this week? Invite participants to share ways to support the work of local groups working for justice or care for the environment.

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## Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

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Then say: **Before we join in the closing prayer, let us pause to acknowledge the presence of the Holy Spirit, who is as close as our very breath.**

*Pause for 30 seconds. Then share the reflection below.*

**Let us Give Thanks**

**Gratitude is not only the posture of praise  
but it is also the basic element of real belief in God.  
When we bow our heads in gratitude,  
we acknowledge that the works of God are good.**

**We recognize that we cannot, of ourselves, save ourselves.  
We proclaim that our existence and all its goods come not from our own devices  
but are part of the works of God.**



Gratitude is the alleluia to existence,  
the praise that thunders through the universe as tribute  
to the ongoing presence of God with us even now.

Thank you for the new day.  
Thank you for this work.  
Thank you for this family.  
Thank you for our daily bread.  
Thank you for this storm and the moisture it brings to a parched earth.  
Thank you for the corrections that bring me to growth.  
Thank you for the bank of crown vetch that brings color to the hillside.  
Thank you for pets that bind us to nature.  
Thank you for the necessities that keep me aware of your bounty in my life.

Without a doubt, unstinting gratitude saves us  
from the sense of self-sufficiency that leads to forgetfulness of God.  
Let us learn to come to prayer with an alleluia heart –  
“Praise to you, O God. Let all creation sing your praise.”

—from *“The Breath of the Soul: Reflections on Prayer”* by Joan Chittister

Then, in these words, invite any participants who have a prayer, a concern, or a request to briefly share it:

We are disciples on a journey.  
We are the body of Christ, broken for the world.  
We hold one another as we carry the concerns of our neighbors.  
If you feel moved, please share your prayer aloud.

Pause

We pray also for the members of the JustFaith community across the country. Unite us through the power of your Holy Spirit, that together we might participate with you in the building of your Kingdom, in order to create a more just and peaceful world.

Amen.