



Thank You & Sorry

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I was buying groceries when the cashier asked me a question. I don't remember the question but I do remember my response, "No, Thank you." Of course, this was no prophetic response but, in line, behind me was a mother with her young son, who upon hearing my answer was so excited that he exclaimed, "Mommy, she said, No, Thank you. She said, No, Thank you!" As I smiled, the mother explained that they had been in process of learning how to say, "No, Thank you," when appropriate.

As I left with my groceries I reflected on this incident. We humans are a relational species who react and respond, generally appropriately. Yet, not all responses come to us naturally. Some responses are learned and practiced in order to be enacted.

There are especially two responses most parents teach their children – "No, or, Yes, Thank you," and "I am sorry." Both expressions are necessary niceties in our relationships and in our lives together.

There is something theological about these very simple yet profound expressions. Both *Thank you* and *I am sorry* are about acknowledging grace and responding accordingly. When we say "Thank you," we recognize the grace, the gift, given to us and we respond acknowledging that we are the recipients of that grace. When we say, "Sorry," we express sadness for what we have done, and we seek forgiveness, acknowledging that forgiveness itself is a gift of grace.

Of course, the word "sorry" does not always imply an apology or confession. The word "sorry" shares its root with the word "sorrow." Hence, we use it to express sadness, often meaning – I am in sorrow with you, or I

share your sorrow. "I am sorry" voices one's pain - sorrow - I hurt because I hurt you, I am in sorrow because I caused you sorrow.

Both expressions of gratitude and confession are vital to our relationships with one another and our relationship with God. *Thank you* and *Sorry* keep our interactions honest and our relationships healthy. And they keep us aware of the grace given to us when we're grateful and when we've erred.

I wonder why many of our congregations, every Sunday, include a prayer of confession in their services but not always a prayer of gratitude. Both confession and gratitude are about acknowledging God's grace – gratitude acknowledges grace for the gifts we receive, confession acknowledges grace for the forgiveness we receive. Both are necessary for a healthy, enriching and growing relationship. Both are transformative.

Why not use different prayers that acknowledge grace during different times of the liturgical year?

Perhaps because we have been isolated for a year, starved for social interaction and fatigued of all things COVID, hence are edgy and antsy, I remind us of these two expressions today. Yes, it's been a tough year but it's also been a year with moments of Grace and gifts, learnings and transformations as well as growth.

Today, I am grateful for the vaccine that will make it possible for us to resume gatherings in person hopefully by fall. So, be vaccinated. But still follow the guidelines and be cautious. Be attentive. Acknowledge grace. Recognize gifts. And when appropriate don't forget to say *Thank you* and *Sorry*.