

Thank You

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/Yes, Thank you," and "I am sorry." Both expressions are necessary in our relationships and in our lives together, in their appropriate context,

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 grace, recognizing it in the gift of forgiveness.

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 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 acknowledge God's grace – gratitude for the gifts we receive, confession for the forgiveness we receive. Both are necessary for healthy, enriching and growing relationships. Both are transformative.

As I take leave I say, "I am sorry" to all to whom I've caused hurt. I say, "Thank you" to you to all with whom I've ministered in partnership. I say, Thank you Conference for being who you are and doing what God is calling you to do.

The Florida Conference is blessed with gifts. Our churches are communities of extravagant welcome, and safe places for all. Caring and engaged in our wider communities, our churches change lives and bring a progressive theological voice to all around. Concerned for justice for all our churches gather to pray, protest and act. May this ministry and witness continue to flourish transforming the world into a realm of love.

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