The Art of Giving Thanks

At this time of year, as the days grow short, the diminishment of light is offset by celebrations that brighten our hearts. Candles are lit as symbols of hope-filled gratitude and we personally, and spiritually, reflect on the blessings that surround us. Food becomes feasts with family and friends, and our bounty is shared with those whose needs touch our hearts. As autumn approaches the winter, acts of kindness gain a prominence that at other times might go unheralded. Thankfulness moves from a habit to a holiday and for me it was a trip to the B Street Safeway that reminded me of how beautiful this art of giving thanks can be — and how important it is to be practiced often.

Ahead of me at the checkout there was a mother and her two daughters. She wore a UCSF health tech badge and her girls, probably 6 and 8, were still in their plaid parochial school jumpers. As I put my groceries on the belt, this mom reminded the cashier that her purchase of Coca-Cola products earned them a free ‘Trick or Treat’ Bag. The cashier asked to which daughter she should give the reward and the motherly admonishment of “Girls you’ll just have to share,” elicited such sibling sadness that I was compelled to intercede.

Noticing that you could also purchase it, I pulled the bar code off another and quietly said to the clerk, “Ring this one up on me and give it to the girls.” With an investment of $1.49, I gained so much more as I ‘banked’ the happy look of surprise on their faces. After a “What do you say, girls?” and a smiling sing-song “thank you,” they told me they’d be dressed as a princess and a ballerina. From mom I learned she had just started working again, was pooped, and the commute from Parnassus to St. Peter’s & Paul’s to San Rafael was grueling, but she was determined to keep the girls in a good school. Then, with their grocery cart and ‘Trick or Treat’ Bags, they headed for the parking lot. After a few scans and an easy swipe of the debit card, so did I.

As I put my purchases in the trunk, I heard those two little voices once again. “Excuse us sir, but we wanted to give you this to say thank you for our bag.” Before me and in front of their mom, they handed me a box containing a genuine, ‘Made in China,’ Buster Posey Bank. “He came to our school and gave us one. Since it’s a boy’s bank, we thought we’d give it to you.” Their gratitude was so beautifully sincere, that their flawed logic was easily forgotten. Their thanking gift to me is now with Herbert’s two year-old son and the goodness that their gratitude engendered is now shared with you. “Best thing that’s happened to me in a long time,” I thought as I drove home.

As this school session ends, in these final days of Fall classes, with Thanksgiving approaching, I’ve placed around Fromm Hall that list of everyone who contributed last year to help our nonprofit ‘school for seniors’ thrive. Without hundreds of Buster Posey Banks, it’s all that I can do, short of promising all those good people listed there that I’ll do my best to continue to offer you the finest lifelong learning experience this side of the B Street Safeway. As you leave for the holidays, don’t forget how wonderful it is to be able to do for others . . . and the effect that the art of giving thanks has at the checkout, in the parking lot, and in the broader world where it is needed most.
THE FROMM INSTITUTE FOR LIFELONG LEARNING at the University of San Francisco
San Francisco, CA 94117-1080 • 415-422-6805 • fromm@usfca.edu • fromm.usfca.edu

A RIVETING FIELD TRIP
Join the Fromm Institute at the Rosie the Riveter World War II Home Front National Historical Park.
A Fromm Field Trip, is scheduled for Tues., Dec. 8, to Richmond’s Home Front National Historical Park where along with a multi-media experience, 94 year-old Park Service Ranger Betty Reid Soskin will lecture about the contribution women made to the war effort. Sign-ups for the day are at the Welcome Booth and the only requirement for attending is your commitment to be there. Flyers specifying date (12/08), time (10 to noon), location (Harbor Way South in Richmond) and directions, are there too. Organized by Fromm student Lynne Raider, all students in Prof. O’Sullivan’s course are encouraged to attend as well as anyone who might be interested including, as Lynne says, “your spouse, your spice or any other personal guest.”

HOLIDAY LECTURES ALMOST SOLD OUT
As the Fromm Institute counts down the final days of its Fall Session, there are less than four dozen seats left for each of the Holiday Lectures. If you plan on attending on either or both Tues., Dec. 15 or Wed., Dec. 16, better act now. Our Holiday Lectures always sell out. For more information on them and the USF Gerontology Scholarship they fund, pick up a flyer today at the Welcome Booth or in the Fromm Institute Office.

WHAT’S LEFT FOR “MAKE-UP” WEEK — NOV. 9, 10, 11, 12
Mon., 11/9: All Monday courses meet for the last time.
Tues., 11/10: Prof. Garrett’s “Epigenetics” meets - 1 p.m.
Wed., 11/11: All Wednesday courses meet for the last time.
Thurs. 11/12: Prof. Newbrun screens “That Sugar Film” - 10 a.m.

EVALUATION REMINDER
Course Evaluations are available for you to complete through the end of the Fall Session. Pick one up and complete as directed. Our Evaluation process contributes to our program’s success and understanding of the Institute’s learning community. When many evaluate, a truer picture comes into focus.

OUR WINTER FACULTY VIDEO PRESENTATIONS
Don’t forget that you can watch our Winter 2016 Fromm Institute faculty speak about their upcoming courses on the Fromm web site starting 5 p.m. on Tues., Nov 10. Viewing these ‘sneak previews’ any place that you might have computer access is a great way to make your mind up about your choices for next January. Just visit fromm.usfca.edu and click on ‘2016 Winter Faculty Presentations’ for an amazing experience.

REGISTERING FOR WINTER CLASSES
The 2016 Winter Course Catalog will be on-line and on its way through the U.S. Mail on Tues., Nov. 10, after 5 p.m. Winter Pre-Enrollment, when everybody has an equal chance of getting all their first-choice classes, runs from Wed., Nov. 11 through 3 p.m. Fri., Nov. 13. Before then, if you are ready to sign up after reading the titles and teachers printed in Newsletter No. 4, you can pick up an Earli-Enroll Form in the Fromm Institute Office now. Select your classes and leave a check or pay in-person by credit card for your membership fee or scholarship contribution. We’ll cash your check/process your credit card and keep your application, handling it right along with all the others received before 3 p.m. on Fri., Nov. 13. Written confirmation of your enrollment will be mailed after Nov. 17 and an On Campus Parking Permit application will be included with that.

FOR YOUR CALENDAR
2016 Winter Classes begin the week of Mon, Jan. 11 and end the week of Mon., Feb. 29. “Make-Up” Week, when classes cancelled by holiday or a faculty commitment/illness, will be Mar. 7 - 10. Two Monday Holidays during the Winter are Jan. 18 and Feb.15. Accordingly, Monday courses will meet from 10 to Noon and from 1 to 3 p.m. to accommodate seven instead of eight meetings during the session and approach the 12 contact hours most classes offer. The Fromm Institute Office and the USF Campus is closed around Christmas and New Year. This year the Fromm Institute will close on Friday, December 18 and re-open on Monday, January 4.