Who is thankful for you?

By Chaplain Barry A. Metzger

Normally chaplains prepare messages intended to encourage folks to reflect on the many blessings for which we have to be thankful during this season. Looking at this from another point of view, it seems to me that emphasizing only blessings received rather than considering what might bring feelings of thankfulness in others seems to be a bit selfish.

Charles Swindoll, a Christian pastor and author, shares the story about a teacher and her class during Thanksgiving season. Thanksgiving Day was near, and for a fun assignment for her class, the first-grade teacher asked them to draw a picture of something for which they were thankful. Most of the class would be considered economically disadvantaged; still many would celebrate the holiday with turkey and other traditional goodies of the season. These, she thought, would be highlighted in most of their art. And so it was.

Except for Douglas. Douglas made a different kind of picture. Of course, Douglas was a different kind of boy. He was the teacher's true child of misery – frail, introverted, insecure and unhappy. As the children played at recess, Douglas was apt to stand by the teacher's side. She had to help all the children occasionally, leading them around by the hand, but with Douglas it was more frequent. One could only guess the pain he felt behind those sad eyes.

Yes, Douglas's picture was different; it consisted of only a hand - nothing else. His abstract image captured the imagination of the other children. Whose hand could it be that Douglas was so thankful for? One child guessed it was the hand of the farmer who had raised the turkey. Another quickly said, "No it's the hand of the farmer who grew the pumpkins for the pies." Still another suggested that it was the hand of a policeman, "because the policemen protect us." Finally a little girl said, "It's the hand of God, because God feeds us."

When the children had gone on to another assignment, the teacher paused at Douglas's desk, bent down and asked him whose hand it was in the picture for which he was so thankful. Douglas turned his head, blushed slightly and replied, "It's your hand, teacher."

The small book of Philemon, consisting of only one chapter brings us a beautiful example of being grateful for someone else. Paul's reason for thanking God for Philemon was that "the hearts of the saints have been refreshed by you, brother." Verse 7. Literally, "you make people feel good inside."

For others to be thankful for us, we have to move away from an inward way of viewing or thinking about life. We must be able to think outwardly, seeing the needs of others even while we may be going through some time of difficulty ourselves. This type of sacrificial thinking and giving are on display when we are "good neighbors." This may require intentional change in our thought process. Things like, "I'm headed to the commissary, and I wonder if "so and so" needs anything, or I think I will give that person a call, they just didn't seem like themselves today." It really doesn't take much in the way of thoughtful words or activities to make a huge impact. We may find that as this way of thinking becomes more of a discipline and desire, the weight of our own struggles seems to lessen just a little bit.

I will leave you with these questions: Who will give thanks for you during this Thanksgiving season? Will we readily accept the expressions of thankfulness they offer?

A getaway not too far away

Tourists buy ferry tickets to Monkey Island at Mikasa Park in down town Yokosuka. Known to the Japanese as Sarushima, Monkey Island is a small island located about one mile off the coast of Yokosuka in Tokyo Bay. The ferry to access the island is located at Mikasa Park and is only a short walk from CFAY Womble gate.
U.S. Navy photo MCC Dan Sanford

By MC3 Dominique Pineiro, CNFJ Public Affairs

For those living in Yokosuka looking to get away from the hustle and bustle of urban life to enjoy an afternoon exploring or relaxing on the beach, a small island in the middle of Tokyo Bay is a popular hot spot amongst the local community.

Known to the Japanese as Sarushima, Monkey Island is a small island located about one mile off the coast of Yokosuka in Tokyo Bay. The ferry to access the island is located at Mikasa Park and is only a short walk from Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka Womble gate. The transit takes approximately 10 minutes, and runs once an hour. The cost for a round trip is ticketed at 1,200 yen for adults and 600 yen for children.

The highest point on the island is 114 feet and offers a stunning view of the surrounding area. The most popular spot for visitors is the sandy beach located at the end of the ferry landing. The beach has a sheltered area for swimming.

Monkey Island features beautiful views, rugged coast lines, caves, historical monuments and odd rock formations which are sure to delight the casual explorer. Monkey Island boasts a rich history that is explained in detail with various exhibits in the museum overlooking the beach area.

According to the island's official website, http://www.sarusima.com, it is the only natural island remaining in Tokyo Bay. The island had previously been used as a fortress up until the end of World War II and the military facilities that were constructed during that period still remain. A quick tour of the island will reveal old artillery positions sitting atop cliffs as well as bunkers used by soldiers during the island's fortification.

If you're looking for a quick getaway to relax and explore with family and friends Monkey Island offers the perfect escape that is sure to please.

To learn more, visit the website www.sarusima.com or check out the short video about Monkey Island on the Duty In Japan YouTube Channel at www.youtube.com/dutyinjapan.

ATGWP, JMSDF build on strong relationship with annual event

(Center) ATGWP Executive Officer Cmdr. Sidney Noe and JMSDF 2MSS Chief of Staff Capt. Teruyoshi Nakamura, join ATGWP and JMSDF Second Service School softball team members in a group photo prior to the start of their annual softball tournament between the two teams. A joint-service barbecue followed the game. The event was held in recognition of the 50th anniversary of the Defense Treaty between the United States and Japan and is part of the enhanced intercultrual and joint-service relations ATGWP and TSD WESTPAC volunteers regularly support for the JMSDF 2MSS Foreign Language Department.
U.S. Navy photo by ITC(SW) Ben Tomlin