

Thanksgiving

by John M. Smith

It was the Tuesday before Thanksgiving. John walked into the Pulmonary Rehab gym, and then stopped. He told me he had something to tell the class and asked if he could have a few minutes for that.

“Sure, that’s fine. What is it?”

“Something I want to share with them. You’ll see.”

The members of the eleven o’clock class sat together, waiting for exercise to start. John slowly stood, white folded paper in hand and shared with the group, this, his thoughts on Thanksgiving.

“I was reminded one recent Sunday morning that I should try to be thankful for adversity and challenges in my life. I have a pulmonary problem. How can I possibly be *thankful* for this breathing challenge?

“I thought of my Pulmonary Rehab class at Holland Hospital. The need for discipline and exercise in breathing has brought me into this class and in contact with its several leaders and classmates. It is these people that give to me my reason for thanksgiving. Because of them my life is fuller, more enriched. But how is this possible? I’ll tell you.

“I had some concern about a grandson. Jane, a respiratory therapist, has teenagers herself. She assured me not to be discouraged. ‘It will all work out alright,’ she said. Without her assurance, worry would have eaten away at me. I am thankful for Jane. I am thankful for acceptance and assurance.

“Lynda, a nurse, is concerned about areas of my health other than pulmonary. She shows concern about my heart and fluid balance, and sometimes insists I contact my internist. I am thankful for Lynda. I am thankful for vigilant health care professionals.

“Ruth always asks, ‘How are you feeling today, John?’ If she didn’t ask, I wouldn’t know that someone really cares. I am thankful for Ruth. I am thankful for sincere concern.

“Can my adversity be met and overcome? I know it can! Bud has shown this to me by his perseverance through a lung transplant. It may take months or years, but even without new lungs, improvement is possible. I am thankful for Bud. I am thankful for witnessing the miracle of organ donation and for perseverance in the face of overwhelming odds.

“Dave has a caustic wit that cheers me up. Without him I might not know that merriness can be so close at hand. With Dave in the class, I can laugh. I am thankful for Dave. I am thankful for laughter.

“Bernie and Shirley remind me that God is still on the throne. I need to visit with them while exercising. They reassure me in a spiritual way. If I did not have this breathing problem I would not be in rehab and would miss out on the conversations we have. Bernie and Shirley are a beautiful couple. I am thankful for them. I am thankful for lasting faith.

“Glenn and I have mutual friends. He keeps me posted on their whereabouts. Without his sharing in rehab, who would keep me in touch? I am thankful for Glenn. I am thankful for connectedness.

“One of my rehab classmates is a man from Cambodia. Om reminds me that life reaches past my background and around the world. Although he understands very little English, Om always has a bright and cheerful smile for me. My life would be less without him. I am thankful for Om. I am thankful for smiles.

“Mitzi shares with me her love and knowledge of classical music. She also communicates her concern about world events. Mitzi is a serious conversationalist. She makes me think. I am thankful for Mitzi. I am thankful for a new friend with sharp intellect.

“For all the others in the class who inspire me by their determination, and for the staff members who help me, I am thankful. So now, because of my breathing problem, my life has become enriched. I have found joy and contentment in the midst of adversity. I am thankful for my pulmonary struggle. And I am thankful for the richness it brings.”

