Yesterday, the Chaplain’s Office had some tables on the Driscoll Bridge set up with all the fixin’s to make Mother's Day cards. Over the course of several hours, probably 35 - 40 people (not just students!) stopped by to make cards for mom. They cut out construction paper, glued on hearts and feathers, stamped doilies, and wrote REAL messages inside (rather than the more generic ones found in cards at Rite-Greens). And when they addressed the cards, some put, as a return address, "your beloved daughter", or "your favorite son." (I don't think anyone, however, traced their hand.) We had a blast.

Clearly the most unusual of the card-makers were the banana and the shark (see above!). The banana said, "Who wouldn't want to make a card for mom?!" The shark was somewhat hampered, his fins not having opposable thumbs, but he persevered. On the other hand, for every card-maker there were probably twenty people who walked by, saying "I'm late to class", or "No thanks" or giving us the look that said, "I'm suspicious of what you're up to!". Thankfully, there were many who said, "I've already sent off my card" or "I'm going home this weekend and will hand-deliver my card."

But it was the ones who passed by with cellphones or iPods affixed to their ears, or those who passed by without even looking that got me thinking. I am making no judgment about them. But they inadvertently pointed out to me my tendency to walk past opportunities, or not to express gratitude for all the things that sustain me, or "birth me" over and over. I'm often in a HUGE hurry to get from one place to another, even though I generally arrive 5 minutes early! What have I missed along the way? A few days ago I caught myself noticing the flowers on the trees in the median strip on Evans Avenue, and wondering "when did that happen?" The blossoming of flowers, or budding-out of trees, is a process . . . and I had missed most of it!

How often do I take for granted, or think "invisible", the folks who stand behind the check-out counters at stores? How often do I respond to their query "Did you find everything?" or their "Thank you" when I leave? Not very often, and usually, if I do, the answer is pretty perfunctory. But when I've made it a point really to engage them, how THEIR faces light up, and how much better I feel when I leave. And, the other day, I made it a point to go out and walk, with no destination, and to walk slowly. I saw wonderful things, and had a couple of fascinating conversations. It was a GOOD walk, and I was grateful that I'd made that "slow-down" decision.

Gratitude. A pretty under-rated virtue in our "age of entitlement". Yet thanksgiving is one of the most ancient parts of every religious traditions. It's a reminder that we're connected to one another, and connected to something greater than ourselves. We have to slow down, pay attention, and we'll receive many gifts -- even the gift of being able to say thank-you.

Thank you, Mom! And thanks to all the mom's: birth-moms and adoptive moms, coach-moms, away-from-home moms, and heavenly moms. Oh, and Mother Earth, thanks for the banana!

Blessings,

Gary