



## FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT—WITH GRATITUDE

Sitting at the most recent American-European Congress of Ophthalmic Surgery (AECOS) European Symposium—which, by the way, was absolutely fantastic—I looked around and was struck that I was among so many thought leaders who are also friends. I felt an immense sense of gratitude and privilege. Like all busy wandering minds, it led me to consider how I got to this fortunate position, and realized that there were a few moments in my life that were transformational. The most important was the opportunity to be educated by some absolutely outstanding individuals. I felt very thankful to them for taking me under their wings and providing an education—both in ophthalmology and otherwise—as well as creating opportunities to help me on my way. I know many of us must similarly reflect on this and are equally grateful; however, in the words of William Arthur Ward: “Feeling gratitude and not expressing it is like wrapping a present and not giving it.”

Among Hindus, Buddhists and Jains, there is a wonderful Indian spiritual traditional celebration that takes place every year in June or July, during a full moon based on the Hindu calendar. It is called *Guru Purnima*. This day is dedicated to spiritual teachers, or *Gurus* (*Gu* means darkness; *Ru* means light that dispels), who share their wisdom without any expectation. In India, the day is celebrated by also thanking teachers with words of appreciation from alumni and presenting gifts in gratitude. In Nepal, it is a national holiday called *Teachers Day*, where similar expressions of thanks are passed from students to teachers. In this age of social media, gestures of gratitude are shared on Facebook and Twitter, and they always bring a smile to my face. In the past, I have often thought of this as a really wonderful gesture, but admittedly never participated.

While being thankful is something to consider, so is living by the examples of those who have influenced us. In the words of one of my own gurus, David Paton, MD,

founder of Orbis, we should live by our human templates of excellence. In doing so we support those who come after us, and the tradition continues. To quote John F. Kennedy: “As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them.”

We do take a lot for granted, and perhaps this is a good time to share our emotions and be thankful for the incredible privilege we have as doctors in this wonderful specialty of ophthalmology, and to be thankful to those who taught and influenced us.

This year, Guru Purnima fell on July 27, 2018. Therefore, I would like to extend my immense thanks and appreciation to all those who taught me, from my very young days at a not-so-easy boarding school in India, through to England, and then to the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland. I would like to indulge further and say a special thanks to David Paton, MD, who took me on as a resident, and both Edward J. Holland, MD, and Richard L. Lindstrom, MD, under whom I was a fellow. They all taught me more than just about ophthalmology and the anterior segment. I can never thank them all enough, and I truly hope I am living by example. ■

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