A favorite YouTube channel I’ve stumbled across recently is “Tribal People Try,” in which several persons, apparently from the Middle East or perhaps more easterly, sample various western foods. Most of the foods have a common familiarity for most Americans in particular (biscuits and gravy, apple cobbler, various snack foods, etc.), surprising the panel participants by the taste and quality, they often comment on the expertise of the chef for even what we might consider the simplest of foods.

Those videos get one thinking about what blessings we have in our lives. That which is so novel and amazing to our tribal panel, we can just mosey down to the local grocery or restaurant and purchase in a few minutes, having available to us culinary delights from all over the world. And we might also think of all the other many things we have at our immediate disposal: clothes, shoes, entertainment, and a veritably infinite array of technological wonders just a few mouse clicks away. Even we who grew up thumbing through the Sears and Montgomery Wards mail order catalogs, waiting weeks for snail-mail turnaround for our orders (remember the “Please allow 6-8 weeks for delivery?”), now fume if orders take more than three or four days to arrive.

We may soon witness swarms of drones from warehouses, rising like bats from their caves daily to fan out over the cities to distribute goods requested even minutes before. And with the continuing improvement of self-driving vehicles, the future may find thousands of “ubering” commuters daily, the task of driving entrusted to an algorithm. To think that many of us still lament the demise of the stick shift!

While such immediate satisfaction may seem to be an advancement, one can’t help but wonder if it might be more so a detriment. In our fast-paced day and age, frustration levels seem to rise in similar proportion to the speed of life, and people seem to be losing tolerance and patience for those who do not move as quickly as their own expectations. All one needs to do is dare travel the speed limit on some of the interstates to witness drivers flying past in testy protest, some flashing... umm... “non-verbal hand signals.” And if (when) our theoretical delivery drone swarms become reality, will we begin to demand immediate attention for all things?

Of course, with increasing impatience in receiving material goods, such impatience may well spill over to effect the same immediacy in our relationships with one another—not only romantic ones but even with friendships and working relationships as well. Already we hear of families shattering over disagreements in politics, social structures, etc., and who has not witnessed passive-aggressive feuds among co-workers? Will these be exacerbated by demands for immediate concurrence with our own ideas? Civility in interpersonal dialogue has already been terribly wounded, people simply refusing to listen even to reasoned arguments of opposing positions, often defaulting to emotional, knee-jerk reactions, and even discarding long-held relationships.

Such impatience in life does not bode well for society. One wonders if we will become ever increasingly disconnected not only within the societal organization but even from friends and family, retreating into the negatively-armed shell of pride and disdain rather than reaching out to cultivate the treasures of friendship and family. After all, if we refuse to listen to others, how will we ourselves know whether we are correct (or not) in our own thoughts and ideas? If our position is indefensible, what’s the point of it? We may be rejecting the wisdom of: “When a wise man is instructed, he gains knowledge.” (Proverbs 21:11)

Rather than skewer one another for opposing positions, jettisoning so unnecessarily even long-held relationships for which we should be most thankful, should we not rather seek to bolster, and even multiply, those relationships for mutual advantage? The very dialogue we tend to eschew might sharpen not only our own understanding and ideas but those of our companions. Will we be so dismissive of amicable human relationships for which we should be most thankful, even though in those we find mutual support and refinement, remembering the old adage: “Steel sharpens steel.” Even our legislative bodies were designed for the exchange of ideas, though regrettable, we now witness there the modern decline of civility, expletives tossed about as if such bolstered rather than detracted from the quality of argument, relying on shock value of vulgarity to carry the day. We would urge all to remember ... “A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver. Like a gold ring or an ornament of gold is a wise reprover to a listening ear.” (Proverbs 25:11-12) Even the earliest civilizations recognized the benefit of civility in speech and the profitability of elegance in spoken word and nimble debate.

Yes, we have so much for which to be thankful—no more so than in our relationships and faith. So let us in daily relations recall St. Paul: “Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer everyone” (Colossians 4:6) and Proverbs: “The wise of heart is called discerning, and sweetness of speech increases persuasiveness ... Gracious words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body.” (Proverbs 16:21-24) And let us never forget all the abundance for which we should be so very appreciative, especially remembering—and living—the enduring wisdom: “A faithful friend is a sturdy shelter: he that has found one has found a treasure. There is nothing so precious as a faithful friend, and no scales can measure his excellence. A faithful friend is an elixir of life ...” (Sirach 6:14-16).