

Thanksgiving

2014

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- A happy Thanksgiving to you all this morning.
- As the Psalm says: “*Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits...*” (Psa 103:2 RSV)
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- We human beings tend to be afflicted with forgetfulness...with ingratitude even with all that we have been given...and our Gospel today reminds us of this.
- Lepers in Jesus’ time were shunned by all—friends and family. They lived in utter misery.
- And yet when Jesus answers their prayer for healing, only one bothers to take the time to return and thank him.
- It reminds us of that saying in the book of Sirach: “*In the day of prosperity, adversity is forgotten, and in the day of adversity, prosperity is not remembered.*” (Sir 11:25 RSV)
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- But we, like those lepers, are beggars in God’s eyes...undeserving, and yet we receive so much.
- But are we slow to give thanks? Do we perpetually reach out our hand to receive, but never give back?
- And yet...like that prodigal son’s father, God waits for us in love...his heart aches for us, and when we return to Him, He runs to meet us...so overflowing is His love for us.
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- On Thanksgiving, I always like to read the first official Thanksgiving Day decree in 1789 by President George Washington:
- "Whereas it is the duty of all Nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to obey His will, to be grateful for His benefits, and humbly to implore His protection and favor -- and whereas both Houses of Congress have by their joint Committee requested me to recommend to the People of the United States a day of public thanksgiving and prayer to be observed by acknowledging with grateful hearts the many signal favors of Almighty ...

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- "Now therefore I do recommend and assign Thursday the 26th day of November next to be devoted by the People of these States to the service of that great and glorious Being, who is the beneficent Author of all the good that was, that is, or that will be -- That we may then all unite in rendering unto Him our sincere and humble thanks -- for His kind care and protection of the People of this Country previous to their becoming a Nation -- for the signal and manifold mercies, and the favorable interpositions of His Providence which we experienced in the tranquility, union, and plenty, which we have since enjoyed -- for the peaceable and rational manner, in which we have been enabled to establish constitutions of government for our safety and happiness... -- for the civil and religious liberty with which we are blessed...
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- Our nation's founders--who had so much less than we have, and who lost so much in the revolution, knew their duty and obligation to give thanks for the gifts of God so freely bestowed.
- God has given us so much. Our material goods when so many have so little...family and friends when many are alone...to live in peace when so many others know nothing but war and terror.
- And to know God in His holy Church...to know the love of God through His Son's sacrifice of suffering for our salvation...to know that everlasting life awaits us if we only BE thankful and follow the way of Christ.
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- "Eucharist" means "thanksgiving"...and there is no greater way for us to give thanks to God than to come together at Mass in remembrance of Jesus' sacrifice and love for us.
- So, as scripture exhorts us: "*O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever!*" (1Ch 16:34 RSV)