



SAINT JOHN FISHER CHURCH

“LOVE GOD. LOVE ALL PEOPLE. MAKE DISCIPLES.”

Thoughts on Thanksgiving Day

Thanksgiving Day is the uniquely American celebration of all our holidays. President Abraham Lincoln, during the Civil War, established Thanksgiving Day as a formal holiday in which we express our thanks to God for the many blessings He has provided. The first recorded public Thanksgiving had taken place in Virginia more than 11 years earlier than the one Pilgrims celebrated, and it wasn't a feast. The winter of 1610 at Jamestown had reduced a group of 409 settlers to 60. The survivors had prayed for help, without knowing when or how it might come. When help arrived in the form of a ship filled with food and supplies from England, a prayer meeting was held to give communal thanks to God. Thanksgiving is the favorite holiday of many Americans. It has the simplicity of a family gathering for a meal. Why should we be thankful this day? We must learn to be thankful, or we will either become bitter and discouraged or grow arrogant and self-satisfied.

Thanksgiving Day also has a profound religious meaning, because giving thanks is the very heart of our natural and spiritual life. For us as Catholics, the central act of worship is called the Eucharist, a Greek word for Thanksgiving. In the Mass, we give thanks to God through Jesus, and share a sacred meal in which we acknowledge the fact that everything we have comes from God. On Thanksgiving Day in many of our rural parishes, people used to bring items such as fruits and grains which were then blessed by the pastor before being taken home.

The Mass on this day which we are celebrating at 9:00 is specifically designed for this our national holiday. I hope you will come and take part. Your monetary offering will be directed towards the needy of our community, and if you place in front of the altar the bread and wine that you will have at your Thanksgiving dinner, your priests will bless them at the end of Mass.

Consider the following lines of scripture from the Mass of Thanksgiving Day:

Every day will I bless you,
and I will praise your name forever and ever.
Great is the LORD and highly to be praised;
his greatness is unsearchable. (Ps 145:2-3)

I give thanks to my God always on your account
for the grace of God bestowed on you in Christ Jesus. (1 Cor 1:2)
May we always be a grateful people and thank God always for all we have and all we are.

Enjoy this day.

Msgr. David A. Sork