
I Give Thanks Simply for the Existence of Thanksgiving Day

**An article in the *Cathedral Times*
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Amidst many phenomena for which I might give thanks this year, here is what I offer: I give thanks simply for the existence of Thanksgiving Day. Yes, There are always a few controversies about how the custom developed in the United States. And there are always a few complaints that some other obsession (football? retail sales?) has exploited it.

But by some miracle or another, Thanksgiving Day, by and large, remains remarkably un-kidnapped and un-exploited by something less than it. This year, a few more retail establishments have announced that they will open for business, but I don't think their business will harm our Thanksgiving tradition.

I am thankful for the mere existence of Thanksgiving. Can anyone, anywhere, argue against a tradition of pausing sheerly for the occasion of giving thanks? There should never be any law forcing people to give thanks, but I continue to be amazed that our culture overwhelming does so. No law or religion actually requires us to give thanks, and yet we do.


Of course, I would claim that our human urge to give thanks is itself proof of something. It is evidence that we are aware of something greater than ourselves. Our desire to thank someone is evidence that we are aware of a "Someone" greater than ourselves. Even if that "Someone" is hard to define, or even if we are unsure how to describe that primordial force" still, even the stiffest among us are aware of what it means to give thanks.

Sometimes, our traditions will fall short. The food won't be exactly right. Some of the family won't be able to show, and we won't know exactly why. Some of us will have no family at all to congregate with. Some of us will learn things during the holidays that we wish were not so. Sometimes there will be arguments that we regret.

But, sometimes, the traditions, even the smallest ones, will carry enormous power. Maybe, the special little dish, or ingredient, that the oldest member of the family continues to provide. Maybe the annual lawn game (football!). Maybe the lovely morning church service. Maybe the annual television sportscast. Maybe the parade. Maybe the long afternoon nap. Maybe the delicious leftovers on Friday. Maybe the colorful walk in the woods or at the park. Maybe even the prayer at dinner, when some of those present haven't prayed since last year.

It is an amazing custom. Our country pauses its busy routines. We pause in order to thank.

Well, that thanks which we offer will do amazing things. It deepens relationships. People are brought together again. Cousins get to know each other. Families are re-united. Friends grow stronger. Thanksgiving deepens relationships. And the deepest relationship of all is the one we have with our Creator, the ultimate Giver of all that is good. Thanksgiving is the time for reunion with God. Thank you, gracious, God. Thank you for so much, even when it is impossible for us to describe all that you are. Simply thanks. Thank you.



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