

Thanksgiving

Thanksgiving is the overlooked holiday. Christmas, July the Fourth, and New Year's Day are extensively advertised and celebrated, but Thanksgiving has become a mere prelude to Black Friday and the Christmas shopping season.

In a world where everything revolves around making and spending money and in a country where some places charge you to air up your own tires, it is easy to see why Thanksgiving would be so neglected. You can't sell gifts, cards, or fireworks for Thanksgiving. Some people dread Thanksgiving and the conversations with eccentric or cantankerous relatives and can't wait to storm the malls in the hunt for the most unbelievable bargains.

Although Thanksgiving meals can be the scenes of some frightening family fights as many loudly announce their opinions as if they were divinely revealed facts and refuse to listen as others insist on their own heavenly ideas. If we take a moment to distance ourselves from what Thanksgiving has become and devote ourselves to what it was intended to be, we might discover why Thanksgiving has the potential to make the whole year better.

To be truly thankful takes some moments of quietness so that we can reflect on all the blessings of the last year. Although the last year might be marred by illnesses and injuries, we can remember those moments in which God has provided support. A visitor may have arrived at the perfect time, or an encouraging word may have been spoken at a particularly difficult moment, or you might have heard God's voice speaking above the clamor of your own thoughts. Now that you remember those things, you realize the wonders that you have experienced.

Taking those moments to thank God for God's gifts will change your attitude. As you remember those gifts, your mood lightens, and it becomes easier to enter the family fray with grace and mercy. You remember that God has given each of us wisdom and that no one is better than another.

If you spend some portion of Thanksgiving giving thanks, you might wonder why you don't do that on the other days of the year. If you entered each day knowing the amazing number and variety of God's gifts to you, you would feel much more encouraged. We often tend to dread the coming day as we worry about the conditions of the fields, the mood of our friends, and the possibility of conflicts. If we remembered how friends have comforted us, or God has taken care of us, we could be more joyful and loving.

The Christian life is an expression of thanksgiving. We thank God for our creation, Jesus Christ for our salvation, and the Holy Spirit for our inspiration. We thank the church and its members for their support, comfort, and love. I hope that you will dedicate some portion of Thanksgiving to remembering God's gifts. I pray that you will let the spirit of Thanksgiving shape and transform the whole year.

Michael

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