

# መዓልቲ ምስጋና

## Thanksgiving Day

ንብላት: 1ቆሮ 1:3-9፣ ሲራክ 50:22-24፣ ሉቃስ 17:11-19

ሰብ ንአምላኽ ከመስግን ከፍቅር ዝተፈጥረ እዩ። ኣብ ት/ክ እግዚአብሔር ንምንታይ ፈጠረና ኣብ ዝብል ናይ ባልቲሞር ት/ክ ክምልስ እንከሎ ክንፈልጦ ክንፈትዎ መንግስተ ሰማይ ክንኣቱ ዝብል ተማሂርና። ዓላማ ተፈጥሮን እምብኣር ምስ አምላኽ ኮና ፍቕሩ ምስትምቓር እዩ። እንተ ኾነ ሕሱም ጸላኢ ነዚ ሕጊ ተፈጥሮና ኣብ መንጎ ኣትዩ አበላሽዮልና፤ ነቲ ብነጻ እንረኽቦ ዝነበርና ጸዕርና ከም ዝሕወሶ ገሩ። ሰብ እምብኣር ከመስግን እንከሎ ንተፈጥሮኡ እዩ ዝገልጽ። ክነመስግን ግቡእና እዩ።

ኣብ ዝተፈላለየ ሃገራት ዝተፈላለየ መዓልቲ ምስጋና ይኹብር፤ መዓልቲ ነጻነት፣ መዓልቲ ወለዲ፣ መዓልቲ ስዉኣት፣ መዓልቲ መማህራን፣ ከምኡ ናይ ኩስሚ ብዓል ክነኽብር ከሎና. . . ነቲ ሰናይ ዝተገብረልና ክነመስግን፣ ነቲ ኹሉ አምላኽ ዝገበረልና ርኢና ንሕና እውን ኣብ ሰናይ ግብሪ ኣሕዋትና ክንወፍር ንማለት እዩ።

ልዕሊ ኹሉ ክነመስግኖ ዝግብኣና አምላኽና እዩ ስለ ዘፍቀረና ስለ ዝፈጠረና ዕለት ዕለት ብጸግኡ ስለ ዝናበየና፣ ኣብዛ ሰዓት ከይተረፈ ንኹሉ ዝሃበና ክነመስግኖ ይግብኣና። እቲ ዝለዓለ ፍቕሪ አምላኽ ዝተራእየሉ ንሓደ ወዱ ምእንታና ኢሉ ምስለኣኹ ገሊጽልና። ክርስቶስ ምእንታና ኣብ መስቀል ተሰዊኡ ኣድሒኑና። ኣብ ትሕቲኡ ክነብር ኢሉ ቤተ ክርስትያና መስሪቱልና፣ ቤተ ክርስትያን ከኣ ብምስጢራቱ ገራ መንፈሳዊ ጸጋታቱ ትዕድለና። ንአምላክ ብክርስቶስ ገርና ክነመስግኖ ባዕሉ ክርስቶስ ምሂሩና። ብስመይ ንሰማያዊ አቦ እንተ ለመንክምዎ ኩሉ ክውሃበኩም እዩ ኢሉና።

ኣብ መአዲ ቅ. ቊርናን ዝለዓለ ምስጋና ነቕርብ፤ “አኩቴተ ቊርባን” ንብሎ ብግሪኽ ምስጋና ማለት እዩ። ነቲ ምእንታና ዝሞተ ክርስቶስ ዘኪርና መስዋዕቲ ክነዕርግ እንከሎና ዝለዓለ ምስጋና ነዕርግ። ኣብ ሓደ መአዲ ሓደ መንፈስ ሒዝና ክነብዕል እንከሎና ኣብ መንጎና ሓድነት ከምኡ ሓደ መንፈስ ክርስቶስ ኣሎ። ብመንፈስ ቅዱስካ ከም እንሓብር ግበረና እናበልና ንጽሊ። ቅ. ቊርባን ቊርባን መለላይኡ ፍቕሪ እዩ ዝገልጽ። ሥጋይ ዝበልዕ ደመይ ዝሰቲ ኣነ ኣብኡ እነብር ንሱ አባይ ይነብር ይብለና። ሎሚ ነዚ ናይ ምስጋና ምአዲ ብዳግም ነዕርጎ። ኣብ መንጎና ሓዲርካ አሎኻ እሞ ነመስግነካ አሎና እናበልና ጸሎትና ነዕርገሉ።

ኣብ ቊርባን መልእክቲ ዝተነበት ጳውሎስ “ሰለቲ ብክርስቶስ ኢየሱስ ዝተሞህበኩም ጸጋ ንአምላኽ ብዛዕባኹም ኹሉ ጊዜ ንአምላኽይ አመስግን ኣሎኹ” ኢናበለ ምምስጋን ክፍሊ እምነትና ከምዝኾነ ይገልጽ። ንወሃቢ አምላክ ክነመስግኖ ከሎና ኣብ ልብና ኣሎ ማለት እዩ። ነቲ አምላኽ ዝገበረልካ ርኢኻ ምኽኣል ንሓደ አማናይ ጸጋ የውህቦ። ጳውሎስ ንሰብ ቆሮንጦስ ቊርባን ዘመስግኖም ነቲ ንሱ ዝመሃሮም ኣብ ልቦም ሓዲሩ ይነብርዎ ከምዘለዉ ምስ ሰምዐ እዩ። ከምኡ እቲ ዝዓበየ ምስጋና ንእምነትካ፣ ነቲ ቤተ ክርስትያን እተስተምህረና ክነብር ክንገልጽ እንከሎና እዩ። ኣብዚ ክንጥንቀቕ ዘሎና ብስም ሰማዕናዮ ንትግብር ኣሎና ማለት ኣይኮነን ክነብር ኣሎና።

ዓለም ሎሚ ንአምላኽ ሓዲጋ ዳርጋ ቦታ አምላኽ ሰብ ተኪእዎ ኣብ ከቢድ ፈተና ትርኩብ ኣላ። ነቲ ጸጋዊ አምላኽ ኣብ ጎኒ ሓዲግና ኣብ ክብሪ ዓለምን ምውናን ነገራትን ዘንቢልና ብዘያዳ እንርእዮ ምዕባሌ ማሪኹና ከም ሰብ ሰዶምን ጎሞራን ኮይና ቦታ አምላኽ ጠፊኡና ኣብ ድቕድቕ ዝበለ ጸልማት ይነብር ኣሎ ብፍቕሪ ዝተፈጥረ ሰብ ባርያ ስምዒቱን ባዕሉ ናይ ዝመሃዞ ግዙእ ኮይኑ ኣሎ። ኣብ አምላኽ ክንምለስ እሞ ነቲ ኩሉ ዘገበርልናን ዝገብረልና ዘሎን ርኢና ክነመስግን ኣብኡ ንመለስ። ኣብ አምላኽ እንተ ተመሊስና እሞ መገዲ እንተ ሒዘና ጳውሎስ **”ዚጎድለኩም ውህበት ጸጋ የልቦን”** ይብለና።

ኣብ መጽሓፍ ሲራክ **“ነቲ ኣብ ኩሉ ዓበይቲ ነገራት ዝገበረን፣ ካብ ንውለድ ጀሚሩ ዘኸበረናን፣ ብምሕረቱ ዝናበየናን አምላኽ ኩሉ ፍጥረት ኣመስግንዎ”** (ሲራክ 50:22) ዝብል ንአምላኽ ክነመስግን ግቡእና ከምዝኾነ ይነግረና። ንአምላኽ እንተ ኣመስገና **“ብልቢ ከም እንሕገስ ይገብረና፣ ከምቲ ናይ ቀደም ዘመን ከኣ ኣብ እስራኤል ሰላም ይህበና፣ ምሕረቱ ይህበና ብኹሉ መዋዕልን ሕይወትና ኸኣ የድጎና”** እናበለ ፍረ ምስጋና እንታይ ምጂኑ ይነግረና።

ኣብ ዝተነበ ወንጌል ሉቃስ ኢየሱስ ብመገዲ ክሓልፍ እንከሎ ዓሰርተ ለምጻማት ካብኦም ትሽዓት እስራኤላውያን ሓደ ግን ሳምራዊ ብሓደ ኣብ ብዓቲ ካብ ሰብ ተፈልዮም ዝነብሩ ዝበሩ ራሕርሓልና ምሓረና እናበሉ ለመንዎ ይብለና። ኣብዚ ብዙሕ ነገር ክንሓስብ ንኸእል።

1. **ዓሰርቲኦም ብሓባር ይነብሩ ነሮም ሓደ ዓይነት ሕማም ስለ ዝነበሮም።** ካብ ሰብ ተፈልዮም ኣብ ግሉል ቦታ ይነብሩ ነሮም ኣብ ሰብ ክቕርቡ ኣይክእሉን እዮም ብምኽንያት ሕማሞም። ኣይሁድን ሳምራውያንን ጥዑያት ብሓባር ክነብሩ ኣይኮኑ ሰላም ኣይብሃሃሉን እዮም። ዓቢ ፍልልይ ነርዎም እዞም ለምጻማት ግን ብሓባር ይነብሩ ነሮም። ሕማሞ ሓድነት ፈጠርሎም። ኣብ መንፈሳዊ ሕይወትና ክንርእዮ ከሎና ሓጢአት ምስ ገበርና ካብ አምላኽን ካብ ሰብን ንፍለ። ስለዚ ክንሓዊ ንኢየሱስ ክንልምን ኣሎና። ንሱ ኣብ መገዲ ሕይወትና ኩሉ ጊዜ ይሓልፍ እዩ። እንተ ኾነ ክንጽውዖ ጸገምና ክንገልጸሉ ይደሊ። ንጸውዓዮ። ሕማም ለምጺ በቲ እዋን ከቢድ ሕማም እዩ ነሩ። ካብ ሰብ ትፍለ ኣብ በዓቲ ትነብር ብኹሉ ፍንፋን ኢኻ። እዚ አምሳል ናይ እቲ ባዕልና ኃጢአት ዘምጽኦ ጉድኣት እዩ።
2. **ብመገዲ ክሓልፍ እንከሎ ዓው ኢሎም ጸዊዎም።** ኣብ ብዙሕ ሉቃስ ኢየሱስ ብመገዲ ክሓልፍ እንከሎ ነቶም ዝለመንዎ ከም ዝሰምዖምን ድላዮም ከምዝገብረሎምን ይነግረና። ሎሚ ንሕና ኣብዚ ቅዱስ ቦታ ብልቢ ንለምኖ ክሰምዓና እዩ። ዓው ኢልና ጥራሕ ንጸውዓዮ። እቶም ለምጻማት ስለ ዝጸውዑ እምበር ምሓለፎም ነሩ እምብኣር ጸጋ አምላኽ ከይ ሓልፈና ክንጽውዖ ኣሎና። ኣብ አምሳል መገዲ ዝኾነ ሕይወትና ኢየሱስ ክንጎፈና እንከሎ ነለልዮ እሞ ጸገምና ንግለጸሉ። ሕማምና ስቓይና ድኽመትና ጸገምና ብሓጺሩ ዓው ኢልና ንንገሮ እሞ ክሰምዓና እዩ።
3. **ኣብ መገዲ እናኸዱ ሓውዮም ይብለና።** ኣብ መገዲ ንኢየሩሳሌም ገጾም እናኸዱ ሓውዮም። ኣብ መገዲ ንስሓ እንከለዉ ምሕረት አምላኽ ወሪድዎም። ኩሎም ከምዝሓወዩ ፈሊጦም እንተ ኾነ ካብኦም እቲ ሓደ ካብ ካልእ ዓለት ዝኾነ ሳምራዊ ጥራሕ ተመሊሱ ንኢየሱስ ኣመስጊቲ። እቶም ካልኣት ኣይተመልሱን። ዘገርም እዩ ክሳብ ክንደይ ጠለምቲ ኢና። ነቲ ኩሉ ዝተገብረልና ንርስዕ ንጠልም ንአምላኽ ከም ሓንቲ ዘይገበረልና ኣይንዝክሮን። ስለዚ ኣመስገንቲ ክንከውን ኣሎና። እሞ እስከ ንድሕሪት ገጽና ቁልሕ ንበል ዝሓለፍናዮ ናብራን ሕይወትን ንርእ ንመርምር እዚ ኣብ ምምስጋን ክመልሰና እዩ።

4. አምላክ አብ ዓቢ ውድቀት ከሎና ከይተረፈ ክረኽበና ይደሊ። አብ ዓቢ ኃጢአት አብ ቂምታን ክፍአትን አብ ሕርቃንን ከቢድ ጽልኢ እንከሎና ክረኽበና ይደሊ። ደንበርበር እናበልና አብ ጸልማት ክንጉዓዝ አይደልን እዩ። ንዘሎናዮ ጸልማት አለሊና ንአምላክ ልብና ክንከፍተሉ እዎ ካብ ኃጢአትና ክነጽሕ እዚ ናይ ሎሚ ወንጌል ይምህረና። ንአምላክ ጸዊዑ ዝኸእል ዕዉት እዩ።

5. እቶም ዝሓወዩ ዓሰርተዶ አይኮኑን እቶም ትሽዓተ ድአ አበይ አለዉ? ንሕና ካበነቶም እና? ክነመስግን አብ አምላክ እንምለስ ዲና ወይስ ሱቕ ኢልና እንኸይድ። ክተመስግን ክትምለስ አሎካ። ተገሩለይ ኢልና አብ አምላክ ክንምለስ ከሎና “ተንሥእ እዎ ኪድ እምነትካ አሕወየትካ” ዝብል ኢና እንሰምዕ። ክንሕደስ ክንቅየር ሓዲስ ሕይወት ለቢስና ምስ ሰብና ክንሕወስ አብ አምላክ ተመሊስና ክነመስግን አሎና።

ምዓልቲ ምስጋና አብ ሕ.መ.አ. ብደረጃ ሃገር ክብዓለሉ ዝጀመረ በቶም ቀዳሞት ስደኛታት አብ ሓዳስ ክፍለ ዓለም ዝመጹ ብ1621 እዩ። እቶም ቀዳሞት ስደተኛታት ሓንቲ ዘይብሎም አብዚ ሓዲስ ዓለም ምስ መጹ ሓንቲ አይነበሮምን እዎ ምስቲ ኹሉ ቁርን አብ ዘይትፈልጦ ዓድን። አብቲ ናይ መጀመርያ ጊዜ እቶም ደቂ ዓዲ ነዘም አጋይሾም ከመይ ገሮም ዕፉን ከም ዝዘራእ አርእዮም ስለዚ አብቲ ቀዳማይ ፍረ ማሕረሶም ንዓመት ዝኸውን እትዋት ስለ ዝረኸቡ ብሓባር ምስቶም ደቀባትን ኮይኖም ናይ ምስጋና ብዓል ብሓባር ከብዕሉ ጀሚሮም። ነዚ ብኸልተ ምኽንያት የብዕልዎ ነሮም።

ሀ. በቲ እዋን ዝረኸብዎ ጽቡቕ ቀውዒ ንምምስጋን። ምስቶም ደቂባት ህንዳውያን ኮይኖም ንሰለስተ መዓልቲ ብሓባር አምስጊኖም።

ለ. ንአምላክ በቲ ኩሉ ዝገበረሎም ንምምስጋን። ጸሎትን ምስጋናን አዕሪጎም።

ብዕሊ ንመጀመርያ ብ1777 አብቲ ጊዜ ናዕቢ አንጻር መግዛእቲ እንግሊዝ መዓልቲ ምስጋና ተአዊጁ። ጆርጅ ዋሽንግቶን ጥቅምቲ 1798 ንመጀመርያ ጊዜ መዓልቲ ምስጋና አብዒሉ። አብርሃም ሊንከን ብዝልዓለ ከምእትብዓል ዝገበረ እዩ። ብ1863 ብአዋጅ ሃገራዊ ብዓል ምስጋና ተአዊጁ። ብ1942 አብ ጊዜ ካልኣይ ውግእ ዓለም ኮንግረስ ንኹሉ ጊዜ አብ ኅዳር ራብዓይቲ ሓሙስ መዓልቲ ምስጋና ኮይና ክትብዓል ወሲኑ። ሎሚ እምነቶም ብዘየገድስ ኩሎም አመሪካውያን ምስ ስድርኦም ታኪን ሓሪዶም የብዕልዎ። ብሓቂ ናይ ስድራን ናይ ሃገር ብዓል እዩ። በዚ ዕለት ኩሉ ዕዳጋ ይሓስር ኩሉ ሰብ ንብዓል ልደት ዝኸውን ህያባት ወይ ዘድሊ ነገራት ይገዝእ ምኽንያቱ ዋጋ ካብ ፍርቂ ንላዕሊ ይሓስር። ስድራታት ዝተፈላለዩ መዘናግዒ ከምኡ ናይ አመሪካውያን ኩዕሶ እግሪ ዝጸወቱ ብምርኣይ ይሕልፍዎ። ስድራታት ፍልልዮም አልዮም ብሓባር ዘብዕልዎ ብዓል እዩ። ናይ ስድራ ብዓል እንተ ተባህለ አይገርምን እዩ።

ስድራ ብሓንሳብ ዝሕጎሉ ዘጽልይሉ ብሓባር ኩነታቶም ዝግምግሙሉ ክረኽቡ እንከለዉ ርክባቶም ብዝያዳ ይድልድል። ስድራ እንተ ዘየለ ኩሉ ፋሕ እዩ ዝብል። ንስድራኻ ምኽባር ንበተሰብካ ምፍቃር ዝመስልዎ የለን። ሎሚ ንሰብ ከቢድዎ ዘሎ ፍቕሪ ሰላም ምምሕሓር ዝገደሎ ስድራታት በዚሑ ስለዚ ነዚ ናይ ሎሚ ምኽንያት ገርና ምስ ስድራና ከመሎና ንበል እዎ ንዘሎ ጸገም ንፍትሓዮ። ብሓባር ንጸሊ ነቲ ሰናይ አድሕድ ጥራሕ ንርአ። ንዝኣኻኽበና እምበር ንዝፈላለየና አይንጠምት።

ነኛሕድና ነቲ ሰናይ አብ መንጎና ዝግበር ርኢና ክንክእል አሎና። ክነመስግን እንተ ጀመርና አብ ልቡ ተመሊስና ነቲ ዝተገብረልና ከነለሊ ክኢልና አሎና መለት እዩ ከምኡ ነቲ ዝገበረ ክሳብ

ክንደይ ከምዝፍቅረና ክንርኢ ክኢልና ማለት እዩ። ክነመስግን ከሎና ዓይንና ይበርህ ይርኢ። ቅ. ጳውሎስ “ብኹሉ አመስግኑ ከመይ አብቲ ብክርስቶስ ዘሎኩም ሕይወት አምላኽ ዚደልዮ እዚ እዩ” (1ተሰሎ 5: 18) እናበለ አመስገንቲ ክንከውን ይነግረና።

- አመስገንቲ ንኹን። ነቲ ዕለት ዕለት ዝግበረልና ነመስግን። ምስጋናና ገሊጽና ክንክእል አሎና። ነቶም ኩሎም ሰናይ ዝገብሩልና ክነመስግናም ግቡእ እዩ። ልዕሊ ኹሉ ንአምላኽ ነቲ ኹሉ ጸግኡን በረኽቱን ስለቲ መወዳእታ ዘይብሉ ምሕረቱ ምስ ወደቕና ክነመስግኖ ይግብአና።
- ንወለድና ክነመስግኖም ይግብአና። ሕይወት ዝሃቡና ንኹሉ ክርስትያናዊ መዕበያን ጽቡቕ አብነት ዝሃቡና።
- ንኹሎም አዝማድናን አዕሩክትናን ፍቕሪ ዝመልኦ ደገፎም ዘርአዩና ከምኡ አብቲ ሓገዝ ዘድልዩና እዋን ዝሓገዙናን ዘበራትዑናን ክነመስግኖም አሎና።

እምብአር ነዚ መዓልቲ ምስጋና መጀመርያ ንአምላኽ ክነመስግ ነቲ ኹሉ ዝሃበና ሕጉ ትእዛዙ እናሓሎና ክነመስግኖ። ነቶም ኩሎም ጽቡቕ ብዝተፈላለዩ መገዲ ሠናይ ዝገበሩልና ክነመስግኖም ይግባእ። አምላኽ ንኹሉ ብጸግኡ ክናቢ አብዛ እንነብራ ዓለም ብፍቕሪ ብሰላም ክነብር ክባርኸና ንለምኖ።

ርሑስ መዓልቲ ምስጋና ንኹልና።

አባ ንጉሠ ፍሥሓ

"Thanksgiving Day"

Reading: Sirach 50:22-24; 1 Corinthians 1:3-9; Luke 17:11-19

Today, as our country takes time out from its hectic pace, we stop to give thanks to God. We really need to ask ourselves what the purpose of this day is for most people in America. We know, if we look back a couple of hundred years, that it was set aside truly to give thanks to God. But for many in our society today it is probably a day that they are just grateful they do not have to work – everyone except the cook, that is. And then, of course, there is the gratitude because it is just a day to relax and a day to have fun and a day to eat good food and all these different things. But all too often God is forgotten. Who is the One who provided all of the things for us?

How many blessings we have that we need to give thanks to God for. If we look through the Scriptures, we read many times over (hundreds of times,

literally) about how we need to give thanks to the Lord, how we need to bless the Lord, how we need to glorify the Lord, and so on. It is not something that is optional for us. But when we look at the difference between what we are doing here today - coming this morning to give thanks to God as we begin our Day of Thanksgiving - as opposed to what many people in this society are doing today, we need to ask ourselves, "What is the difference?" The difference is that God is the center and that today is not just a day to be able to say, "Thank You, Lord, because we have a turkey and all kinds of good stuff. Thank You that we can all get together with the family," but it is, rather, thanking God not only for those blessings, but for all of the blessings that He has given to us: the blessing of life, the blessing of eternal life, of new life in Baptism, the blessing of the forgiveness of sins, and the blessing of the greatest gift of all: the thanksgiving sacrifice of the Eucharist. That word, again, as we all know means "Thanksgiving." Eucharistein - "to give thanks" - in Greek. It comes, actually, from right out of the Hebrew as part of the Passover meal: part of it was what they called the toda. Toda, in Hebrew, means "Thanksgiving." So the Lord, at the Passover meal, took the bread and gave thanks to God.

And so, too, how grateful we need to be. As Saint Paul reminded the Corinthians that he thanks God every day for them because of their faith and because God has blessed them so abundantly with all the gifts of knowledge and of faith and of all the things that God has given, each one of us needs to be grateful for those things - that God has given us faith in the midst of a society that is generally faithless, in the midst of a society that has gone completely astray from God. Have you ever stopped to think what a blessing it is that God has given you faith? That God has chosen you from all the people in this society and in this generation to believe in Him? And even from among all the Catholics and all the Christians, that we are the ones who have come to Him today to give Him thanks? It is a great temptation to be like the nine lepers who simply rejoiced in the gift that God had given them; that is, rejoiced for themselves. That is very easy to do on a day like this. Many people, as I mentioned already, will be rejoicing just because they have a day off, because they can sit in front of the TV set and watch a couple of football games, because they have a table filled with food and their bellies can be filled with food. They rejoice in their own pleasure, in their own comfort, in their own ease, rather than rejoicing in God who has provided this for them. The nine lepers, I think, were probably just as happy that they had been healed as the one who came back. But only one was there to thank God.

We recognize how much God has done for us: all of the blessings that He has given to us. And so we have come today, not only rejoicing that we

have these blessings but to give thanks to God who has given us these blessings. That, in and of itself, is an extraordinary gift and we need to be grateful to God just for the gift to be grateful. What a blessing He has given to each one of us to be able to recognize that there is Someone beyond ourselves and that we are not the center of it all, but rather, that we need to come to Him and say "Thank You."

If you look in the Book of Leviticus, there are many laws that are laid out for the people to come to give what they called "a thanks offering to God." That is, when they recognized what God had given to them and they wanted to give an offering of thanksgiving, the way it was done was very specifically laid out. For Christian people, gratitude must be at the very center of our lives because of all the things that Jesus wanted to draw attention to, the one thing that He held up as the most important was this offering, this sacrifice of thanks that we need to give to God in the Eucharist. And so, as we gather today to thank God for all of the blessings that He has given to us (and as I do every Thanksgiving) do not forget to thank God for the sufferings, do not forget to thank God for the people who have made your life miserable this year - because of all the people, they are the ones who have helped you more than any to grow in virtue. Thank God for your friends, indeed, but they have not helped you nearly as much as the people whom you might not consider your friends. Thank Him for all of the suffering because it is through suffering alone that we are really able to grow the most in holiness. So do not shun those things, but embrace them and thank Him. As we come to the Eucharist today, as we now go forward to offer this sacrifice of thanks to God, take all of those sufferings and all of the sacrifices, as well as all of your gratitude, and put them on the paten, put them in the chalice. Offer them to God in union with the suffering and the gratitude of Jesus Christ, as the one pure sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, our spiritual worship.

**"Thanksgiving Day"**

**Reading: Sirach 50:22-24; 1 Corinthians 1:3-9; Luke 17:11-19**

Today as we take time out as a country to give thanks to God for all of the graces and blessings that He has bestowed upon us, we recall that for us, as Catholic people, to give thanks is something that we do constantly. It is not something we do only once a year but it is something we do every day. And it is something, in fact, which the Church does at every moment of every day because somewhere on the face of the earth at every single moment of the day, every day, Mass is being offered, people are praying, hymns of thanksgiving are being offered to God. So in a special way as we come today before Our Lord, we call this to mind in a particular manner. And of all the things that we have to be grateful for, certainly we need to be grateful for things that we take so much for granted, such as our lives, spouses, children, grandchildren, all the various blessings that the Lord has given to us.

On behalf of the other priests of the parish, I also extend our gratitude to all of you. How grateful we are for your faithfulness, for your union with Christ. You make our jobs much easier when you are trying to do what is right, when you are trying to grow in holiness, when you want to be able to hear the Word of God and to put it into practice in your lives. It is a very difficult thing to stand up and preach to people who do not want to hear it. But it sure makes my life a lot more pleasant when I get to stand up and preach to people who do want to hear the Gospel. So I am very, very grateful to each one of you and to all the members of our parish for that kind of faithfulness and that desire to serve Our Lord by embracing the Gospel message.

Still, even with that, we need to look at our own lives and challenge ourselves even more, to be able to look at what Our Lord tells us in the Gospel reading. We hear about the ten lepers who are cleansed and only one returns to be able to thank Our Lord. And so as we look at our own spiritual leprosy, we ask ourselves, first of all, "How often do we come to Our Lord to be cleansed? That is, how often do we come before Him with our sins and cry out, 'Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!?' How often do we bring our sins before the Lord to confess them and to receive His forgiveness?"

And when we recognize the mercy of God, then we need to ask ourselves, "How often do we come before Him to give Him thanks?" Of all the things we have to be grateful for - and they are way too many to be counted; as the psalmist would say regarding the thoughts of God, "To number them I must be eternal like You," and "They are more than the sand on the shore of the sea" - if we were to start thinking about how many things we really need to thank God for, we would spend the rest of our lives just simply counting them.

But of all the things, there are two in a special way that on this planet we need to be most grateful for. One is Our Blessed Lady, and two is Our Blessed Lord - not in that order. We need to be so grateful to God for giving to us our Mother, for her care and intercession for each one of us, for her fidelity to the Lord, for her saying "yes" to God that she would bear the Savior of the world so that each one of us could have salvation. We have to be grateful to God for Our Lady who continues in her motherly care for all of her children, as she prays for us and she helps us along the way that she has already walked. We have to be so grateful that there is one human person that lived the way God wants all of us to live and who stands, not only as the exemplar, but as the one who calls each one of us to be united with her in glorifying God, in thanking Him, and in praising Him.

Then how grateful we must be to God for His love, His humility, His mercy in becoming one of us, in living with us, in dying for us, in opening Heaven for us and yet continuing to remain with us. As we come to Mass week after week to give thanks and praise to God for the most glorious gift of the Most Holy Eucharist that He has given to us to remain with us all days until the end of the world, even then we have to ask ourselves, "How often do we come back? How often do we come to visit Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament?" Are we like the nine lepers who recognize that He is the Lord and we cry out, "Jesus, Lord, have mercy on us!" and when He does we just carry on our merry way. Or are we like the one who recognized what the Lord had done for him and, therefore, we come before Him in the Eucharist often, even daily if possible, to be able to pray, to be able to unite our hearts more perfectly to the Lord, to give Him the thanks and praise that are due simply because of Who He is, and even more, for what He has done for us.

He is right here in the Eucharist, 24 hours a day, simply waiting for us. The Eucharist, of course, means "thanksgiving". Jesus, in giving thanks to His Father for each one of us, offered Himself in the Blessed Sacrament not only as a sacrifice, but as a means of His abiding Presence because He was so grateful to God for you. Now, each one of us needs to ask, "How grateful to God am I for Him? If He loves me so much, if He is so thankful to God - as He makes clear in His high priestly prayer in Saint John's Gospel in chapter 17 - so thankful for me to His Father that He would give Himself to me in such an incredible manner, how thankful to God am I for Him? And how much do I give myself to Him and how often?"

As we stop to think about all of the gifts that God has given to us and we come before Him today most appropriately to say "Thank You", we need now to look even beyond and ask if our lives are a constant sacrifice of

thanks and praise to God, if we are really living what it is that we profess, if we recognize what God has done for us, and if we are giving the appropriate thanks daily that we should. Not just taking time out once a year, not just taking the time once a week, but having time set aside everyday to unite ourselves with God's two greatest gifts: His Son and His mother, and giving thanks to God from hearts that have been forgiven, that recognize His mercy and understand the necessity of coming to Him daily to say "Thank You".

### "Thanksgiving Day"

**Reading:** Sirach 50:22-24; 1 Corinthians 1:3-9; Luke 17:11-19

In the Gospel reading today, we hear the story of the ten lepers and the one foreigner who came to give thanks to God. It reminds us of just how much we can take God for granted. The things that we become accustomed to we sometimes do not think too much about, and yet the gratitude is supposed to be always, first and foremost, in our minds. When we think about the very things that one can do with prayer, it is to adore God, it is to give Him thanks, it is to tell Him that we are sorry, and it is to ask for favors that we need. Far too often, for most of us, prayer is nothing more than the last – and that is really where it belongs: the last. The adoration and the gratitude to God need to be the very first and foremost things in our minds because to fail to say “thank you” is in essence to refuse or reject the gift, and, of course, it is a disrespect to the giver of the gift.

Sometimes what happens when we are dealing with God is that we recognize there are some things for which we should give thanks and then there are other things for which we do just the opposite. But I would recommend that if we really looked very carefully at the situation, the things for which most of us are going to be most readily willing to give thanks are the very things for which we should not, and the things that we do not want to thank God for are really the things that we should. For instance, we could understand that the leper who was healed came back to thank God. His leprosy was healed; he could now be part of society once again; he had great reason for rejoicing and giving thanks to God. The real question is did he give thanks to God when he got the leprosy? My suspicion is probably not. It gives us reason to stop as we look back over the year and ask ourselves, “How many things do we have to be thankful to God for?” Of course, they are countless. Everyday they are countless. For every breath that we are able to take, for every sound of a little child’s

voice, for the beauty of all God's creation, for everything that He does for us day in and day out. But, again, I would recommend that we stop and think a little deeper and say, "Are we grateful for the things that most of us would want to reject?" The people in our lives who are difficult, the circumstances that we do not like, the things that we find to be quite a pain that we have to endure and that we do not like, those are the things that we really need to be grateful for because those are the things above all else that will make us saints. Those are the things that are going to purify our faith, as well as our patience, our meekness, our charity, our hope and all the other virtues. When one has a life that is very easy – and that is the American way – we tend to get spoiled rather badly and we tend to take things for granted.

Saint Paul, for instance, in the second reading told the people of Corinth that they were endowed with every spiritual gift and that God would keep them faithful to the end. When it comes right down to it, is there anything more important than that? How often do we thank God for all those things? What most of us want is more. We look at it and say, "Well, I don't have this or that spiritual gift." But most of us, if we are interested in getting spiritual gifts (charismatic gifts, for instance) it is not to serve God and His people, it is for ourselves. It is because we want people to see us; we want them to think how wonderful we are. God is not going to do that for us because He knows we would lose our salvation if that is the case. And so, in that case, we need to be very grateful to God that He did not give us these extraordinary gifts because they would be harmful to us. But He has given us absolutely everything we need in order to get to heaven; and, above all, that is what we need to be grateful for.

Now I suspect that if we even stop to think about why we should be grateful for the society in which we live, most of us would think of things like indoor plumbing, central air conditioning, forced air heating, all the amenities of life, fancy cars with all the gadgets and buttons and all the nice things, all the fancy equipment that we have to run everything these days. I would submit that what we really need to be thankful for is that we have an opportunity to suffer for our faith in this society, not for how easy life is, but the fact that we have an opportunity to make a stand for God, that we live in a society which is godless and in the midst of that godlessness God has given to each one of us the gift of faith. For that gift we must be eternally grateful. And we have an opportunity to put it into practice, not that it is easy because everyone else around us is putting it into practice – because it is not – but precisely because we have to make that choice to live our faith, to put it into practice in a pagan society, to be ridiculed and rejected for our faith in Jesus Christ. Remember, in the

Beatitudes it is then that the Lord says that we should rejoice and be glad. If you think about the Beatitudes, the things that most of us would be grateful for are the things that God tells us we should be feeling woe for: “Woe to you rich...woe to you who are full...woe to you who are comforted.” You see, the things most Americans would be grateful for are the things that are going to lead us away from heaven. and the things most of us want to scream at God for and be angry about are the things that are going to lead us to heaven.

And so, while, yes, we need to thank God for all the many blessings, for all the wonderful things that He does for us (and even sometimes we can thank Him for the ease and the comfort) above all we need to thank Him for the struggle, for the difficulties, for the fact that we have an opportunity to make the choice to live our faith in a society that has chosen against God and to thank God for the time in which we live. As the novel started: “It was the best of times and the worst of times.” That is today. It is the worst time in human history to be alive, on one level; and it is the best time in human history to be alive because we have an opportunity to truly be Catholic, to truly live our faith, to put it into practice, and to be able to see the power of God at work in a world that has rejected Him. What an incredible gift God has given us life in these days and in this country because we have an opportunity to be counter-cultural, to make a stand for God when most have turned their back on Him. For that we need to be exceedingly grateful. We have to recognize that we are that one leper, that of all the people who have been baptized into Jesus Christ, of all the people who know what can be known of God, there is only a very, very small handful that are willing to put their faith into practice and to come to God to say “thank you” for the gifts He has given.

So I thank you for your fidelity to God. I thank you for your fine example of living out the Faith which is an encouragement to those around you, and it is an encouragement to me and to the other priests to be able to see good and faithful people who are putting their faith into practice. We are very, very grateful to you for your faith, for your prayer, for your goodness, for your fine example. I can only encourage you to keep that up because things are going to become more difficult as we move forward and we need to be more grateful than ever to God for our faith and for the grace to be able not only to believe in Him but to live according to His Will. That is the greatest gift of all in this world because it leads us to the gift which is beyond all others – that is, to eternity with God – and there is nothing else that is worthwhile. So continue to live your faith. But in all things, in the good times and in the bad, give thanks to God for everything through Jesus Christ, Our Lord.

## "Thanksgiving Day"

Reading Sirach 50:22-24; 1 Corinthians 1:3-9; Luke 17:11-19

In the second reading today from Saint Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians, Saint Paul tells the Corinthians that he gives thanks to God the Father always in his prayers for them, and then goes on to explain to them why they need to be so grateful to God; that among them there are no spiritual gifts that are lacking, that God has provided for them in all ways. So too it is with us. God provides for His Church everything we need, but the problem most of us have is that we do not recognize the spiritual gifts. We live in this very materialistic and scientific age; consequently, we miss the things that are spiritual. Yet, at the same time, what we have to be able to see is that even if we are perhaps overlooking some of the particular gifts that God has given, we still need to be able to see the greater gift, which is obviously what you are recognizing because of your very presence here today. The greatest gift that God has given to each one of us, beyond life itself, is faith, faith in Him in this society which does not recognize God or does not think it needs God, the fact that the Lord has placed into our hearts the faith to be able to recognize our dependence upon Him and the grace to be able to recognize that we need to come before Him like this leper from the Gospel reading and say, "Thank You."

If we go back some two hundred and thirty years, we recognize that the early pilgrims were people fleeing religious persecution, people who were fleeing a society that had become exceedingly decadent and very immoral, and they were looking to be able to practice their faith.

Among these early pilgrims, recall, were many Catholics, those who founded, for instance, the states of Maryland and Virginia—both named after our Blessed Lady by Catholics who came to America. The first religious who came to America came in 1776. It was a community of Carmelite nuns who came to the New World to be able to lay a spiritual foundation. The very essence of what our founding fathers came for was to practice their faith, and it is that faith that we have to be so grateful to God for because now it is we who in fact live in a society that is similar to the one they were trying to flee. We live in a society where they are trying to push God out of society, but how grateful we must be that the Lord has given to us the grace to recognize Him, to know Him, to love Him, and to serve Him.

We also need to be grateful even for the society in which we live, not because it is so decadent but because there has never been a better time to be a saint. There has never been an easier time to be a saint. This is what

we need to be grateful for. If we can simply maintain our faith—which is not so simple—but if we can maintain our faith in the midst of this society, we can become saints. We can become great saints, lights shining in the darkness of this world.

Saint Paul tells us that we are to give thanks to God the Father in everything we do. That is something we all need to look at. Do we recognize that in everything we need to be grateful? There are so many things we do that we think we can do all by ourselves: “I really don’t need God to do this thing or that thing because I can handle it myself.” Remember that even the talents and abilities you have are God-given. Certainly, we have had to work at developing those abilities, but God is the One Who gave them in the first place. So to say, “I can do this all by myself,” no we cannot. We cannot do it unless we have the ability which is given by God, so we still need to thank God even for those abilities. We need to thank Him for every breath that we can take, because if He did not provide for us to be able to have the oxygen, we would not even be alive! Again, we begin to see why Jesus says, Without Me you can do nothing. We could not even take a breath without Him.

Everything is a gift, even the things that do not look to us like the gifts we would give to somebody we love, because sometimes they are not very pleasant. Things happen in our lives which, in fact, are pretty rotten. When was the last time we thanked God for those? Most of us probably look up at Him and have some things to say that are not very prayerful, are they? But we are supposed to give thanks to God just the way Jesus did before He suffered and during His suffering.

Again, we see how God is providing for each one of us to become saints. That is what we need to be most grateful for because the faith by itself, excellent as it is, is not an end in itself. Heaven is the end. Union with God is the end. If we have been able to recognize this gift then we need to be able to come to Him and to thank Him, which of course we are doing right here and now in the most profound and perfect way. The word Eucharist, remember, is the Greek word that means “thanksgiving.” So we are here offering the sacrifice of thanks to God, offering the perfect sacrifice which brings the grace of God to us and gives Him the greatest honor and glory. But it is not just here in church that we are to do this; this is to be the pattern for every single aspect of our lives so that in all we do we give thanks to God the Father through Jesus Christ Our Lord. That is the direction Saint Paul gives us. That is to be what our lives are all about. In everything, no matter what it is that happens in our day-to-day lives, we need to say “Thank You,” and we need to recognize that absolutely everything that happens in our lives, no matter how good or bad they may

seem at the time, are all gifts from God and they are all designed to help us grow in holiness and become great saints.

If we can keep our focus on God, it will help to put a perspective onto everything else and then we can do exactly what we have been told to do, to come back to Him, to thank Him, and then even at the moment in absolutely everything to give thanks to God the Father through Jesus Christ Our Lord.

## THANKSGIVING

### Love Makes Us Be. Called to be a People of Thanksgiving

Thanksgiving brings us together as a Nation. In the rich tapestry of our diversity we rediscover our unity in the values which inform and ground the American experiment in ordered liberty.

Many Catholics will participate in the Liturgy and hear the Gospel chosen for this day from St. Luke (Luke 17:11-19); the familiar story of the ten lepers who were miraculously healed by Jesus during his journey to Jerusalem. Only one came back to give thanks. The challenge leaps forth - are we that one?

Our celebration of the Eucharistic liturgy is always a call to return to the source of every gift, the God who gave Himself for us. It is the invitation to give thanks which gathers us as families around the dinner table today. We will tell stories of our past and toast the hopes for our future. Although a "secular" holiday, the celebration is profoundly religious at its core. Even in the midst of the struggles we have face in the United States, we really do need to stop and give thanks! We are a truly blessed people.

Chiara Lubich was the beloved foundress of the Focolare movement, one of a growing number of ecclesial movements flourishing within the Catholic Church. The modern Pope's have called these predominantly lay movements the "finger of God" for this new missionary age. They are what Blessed John Paul II and his successor, our beloved Pope Benedict XVI call the "signs of a springtime of world missions."

Chiara was born on January 22, 1920 and went home to the Lord on March 14, 2008. Those who knew her say that she lived her life animated by love and in a constant attitude of thanksgiving. Inspired by her heroic virtue, men and women were drawn closer to Jesus Christ and, in Him, into a deep relationship with one another to continue the redemptive mission of Jesus. This movement spread to

more than 180 countries and had 140,000 members and 2.1 million affiliates at the time of her death. She was 88 years young, still in love with Jesus and filled with joy.

It was Chiara's intimate relationship with the Lord which gave her the grace to love as He loves. It was also the source of her continual gratitude. It can be just that way with each one of us. That is really what this Holiday invites us to consider. A readiness to give thanks in all circumstances - and for everything and everyone - is a sign of holiness in the lives of so many of the great saints and heroes of the Christian tradition.

On this Thanksgiving Day I want to share a few of Chiara's words as a reflection: "Yes, love makes us be. We exist because we love. If we don't love, and every time we don't love, we are not, we do not exist. There's nothing left to do but to love, without holding back. Only in this way will God give himself to us and with him will come the fullness of his gifts.

"Let us give concretely to those around us, knowing that by giving to them we are giving to God. Let's give always; let's give a smile, let's offer understanding, and forgiveness. Let's listen, let's share our knowledge, our availability; let's give our time, our talents, our ideas, our work; let's give our experience, our skills; let's share our goods with others so that we don't accumulate things and everything circulates.

"Our giving opens the hands of God and He, in his providence, fills us with such an abundance that we can give again, and give more, and then receive again, and in this way we can meet the immense needs of many."

This beautifully simple yet profound truth was also regularly expressed by Blessed John Paul II. In his 1979 Encyclical Letter "The Redeemer of Man" he put it this way:

"Man cannot live without love. He remains a being that is incomprehensible for himself, his life is senseless, if love is not revealed to him, if he does not encounter love, if he does not experience it and make it his own, if he does not participate intimately in it. This, as has already been said, is why Christ the Redeemer "fully reveals man to himself". If we may use the expression, this is the human dimension of the mystery of the Redemption. In this dimension man finds again the greatness, dignity and value that belong to his humanity. In the mystery of the Redemption man becomes newly "expressed" and, in a way, is newly created." (Par. 10)

The Feast we celebrate in the "secular" arena today, Thanksgiving Day, reveals that there really is no separation between the secular and the spiritual. After all, God is the Creator of all and the Author of life. He is also the source of all that is good - whether He is acknowledged to be so or not. As the beloved disciple John said "Beloved, let us love one another, because love is of God; everyone who loves is begotten by God and knows God." (1 John 1:4-7)

We will love today. We will reach out to one another and to the less fortunate. When we choose to love, we participate in the love of God. This is true for even those who do not - yet - acknowledge Him. We will give thanks today, for all the great gifts we have received. As we do, we draw His presence more deeply into our daily life together. Love and gratitude are the keys to unlock the deeper meaning of life and the goodness of this day.

The smell of turkey will soon fill this home as it will homes around this beautiful Nation. It arises from the early preparation of the gravy and dressing and lingers throughout the day. Our daughter will make the meal, using her mother's recipes, and adding her own. The table will soon be set for the Feast. And what a wonderful Feast it is - this unique American celebration called Thanksgiving. It is a rather extraordinary tradition. An entire Nation, in the beauty of all of its rich diversity and pluralism, pauses as one - to love and to give thanks for all of our blessings and our bounty.

We gather to express our gratitude for our health, our happiness and our life together. Around tables throughout America, children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren will gather with mothers and fathers, Grandpas and Grandmas, extended family, neighbors and friends to thank God and one another. And then, we all feast; not only on the food, but even more importantly, on the gift of the love which informs all family relationships and true friendships, the real source of lasting joy.

As Chiara Lubich, Blessed John Paul II and Pope Benedict remind us, we were indeed made for love. It is no accident that the first encyclical letter authored by Benedict XVI was entitled "God is Love." Love is the very meaning of life and loving is the very essence of what it means to be a human person.

Love will call us to share our stories in countless homes throughout the United States and abroad this Thanksgiving day. Even the times that seemed so painful and difficult when lived in love, take on new beauty. Time has a way of revealing the mysterious plan of a loving God who was at work - not in spite of those problems but through them - drawing us closer to Him, to each other and to what really matters most in life.

On this "secular" holiday, infused as it is with such profoundly religious meaning, Catholic Christians should really take some time to reflect on the fact that the Greek word from which we derive the word "Eucharist" is rendered "Thanksgiving" in English. The Catechism reminds us "The inexhaustible richness of this sacrament is expressed in the different names we give it. Each name evokes certain aspects of it. It is called: Eucharist, because it is an action of thanksgiving to God. The Greek words eucharistein and eulogein recall the Jewish blessings that proclaim - especially during a meal - God's works: creation, redemption, and sanctification." (CCC #1328)

How appropriate. In that Sacrament of Sacraments, we receive Jesus Christ in

His fullness, the greatest gift of the Father. And, we are called to give thanks. In the words of the Apostle Paul to the early Christians we are reminded to "Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus." (1 Thess. 5:16-18) One of the ways Christians do this is to become people who choose to live our lives for others. When we give thanks we learn to love.

Today the Church calls her faithful sons and daughters to give thanks in her Liturgy. St. Teresa was fond of saying "We will not learn how to love if we are not grateful." The Readings for the Mass for Thanksgiving call us to gratitude. Jesus, in His Sacred humanity shows us how to live a life of gratitude and, through the gift of Himself - makes it all possible.

Blessed John Paul II affirmed in a message he gave on July 29, 1987, "In the truest sense we can say that the prayer of the Lord and his entire earthly existence become a revelation of the fundamental truth: Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of Lights" (James 1:17). Thanksgiving is the source of all blessings from on high. 'Let us give thanks to the Lord our God' is (the) invitation the Church places at the centre of the Eucharistic liturgy."

Cultivating a disposition of gratitude and a way of living our lives in love for others - such as what was demonstrated in the lives of Chiara Lubich, Blessed John Paul II and now in the life of Pope Benedict XVI - is the key to living our earthly lives to the full. It also prepares us for eternity. We will be reminded again in the prayer of the priest in the Preface of the Mass for Thanksgiving Day:

"Father, all-powerful and ever-living God, we do well always and everywhere to give you thanks through Jesus Christ our Lord. We offer you, Father, this sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving for the gifts you have granted us. Help us to recognize them as the benefits we have received from you through no merit of our own" (Prayer over the Gifts)

Let us choose to make this prayer our own today. Happy Thanksgiving to all of our readers, may it be a day for love and gratitude. No matter how difficult the challenges we face, we have so very much to be grateful for. As we give thanks, we find the strength we need to love even more fully.

As we give thanks, we discover how to be faithful to our call to continue the redemptive mission of Jesus Christ, Love Incarnate, in an age hungering for the fullness of God's love. Christians are called to take the kernel which lies at the heart of this Holiday and plant it in the field of the world; so that it can bear the fruit which it points toward. We are called to give thanks and we are called to love with the very Love of God in which all human love is revealed and through which all human love is perfected.

Learning to Love is learning to Live. We are called to be a People of Thanksgiving. We are called to love. Happy Thanksgiving.

