

Thanksgiving Day – November 24, 2005 (Year A)

This is not a good day to be a turkey – did you know that each year on this day 45 million turkeys are cooked and eaten. In fact, according to the National Turkey Federation 95% of Americans eat turkey today. Not a good day to be a turkey! Nor is it a good day to be a pumpkin. Statistics reveal that 55 million pumpkin pies are cooked and eaten today.

But it's a good day to be American – so much history, family, tradition and food – and the leftovers. Wow!

And for some of us, even with the day off – the table set – it's still not a good day! Perhaps a loved one has to work, or maybe we lost our job, maybe an illness in the family. Or perhaps our relative is one of thousands of troops serving our country in Iraq/Afghanistan. Or maybe our dear loved one whom we spent numerous Thanksgivings with recently died – and this marks the first Thanksgiving without them. And the thought of entering deeper into the holiday season without them is just excruciating. For some this is not a good day.

What is it though that makes a day “good”? There no doubt are many responses to this question. For example, the presence of God, beautiful weather, productivity and rest just to name a few. Perhaps the best response to this question is Thanksgiving! What makes a day good is a grateful heart. In other words, it is when we are genuinely thankful that we can say that it is a good day.

In today's second reading to the Corinthians St. Paul exudes gratitude. He writes, “I give thanks to my God always on account for the grace of God bestowed on you in Christ Jesus...” It is noteworthy that Paul is not only thankful but also this gratefulness is something that permeates his heart “always”. As a result of that position, St. Paul withstands shipwrecks, imprisonment, a thorn in the flesh and the scorn of others. While there were many challenges in his life, it could be said that every day was a good day because of his grateful heart.

But it is increasingly difficult to exude a grateful heart over the long haul. There's almost an innate human tendency on our part to take things for granted. It is one of the great occupational hazards of being human. What is more, in our humanness we sometimes come to expect things as opposed to accepting everything as a gift. In addition, we seem to want more. What ever became of enough?

The Gospel for today highlights the human struggle to be grateful. Jesus is on a journey and lo and behold, he encounters ten persons suffering with leprosy. They all want to be healed. Jesus directs them to the priests--but interestingly enough, only one returns to give thanks. This leads Jesus to say, “Ten were cleansed, were they not? Where are the other nine?”

On this Thanksgiving Day, we as a nation and as individuals give thanks to Almighty God for all of his graces and blessings in our life. We are blessed! And while we all have struggles, challenges and difficulties – we still have much of which to be grateful. And because of that gratitude we can say that today is a great day. After all, we could be a turkey or a pumpkin.

Happy Thanksgiving!