

## THANKSGIVING!

*When we remember the Giver of all good gifts*

As Thanksgiving approaches, which begins the Christmas season celebration, I think it remains relevant to remember those who braved a sixty-six day arduous voyage on the *Mayflower* to establish Plymouth in 1620 and set up the foundations for the God-given right of freedom for this Nation's future generations. These Pilgrims chose to stand for the truth without compromise and for the hope that they and their posterity could experience liberty under God. It cost them everything to lay the groundwork of the most prosperous and free nation in history.

Their significant document, The Mayflower Compact, placed in the hands of the people the right to create laws and constitutions under God's direction. This document became a basis for more than eighty colonial charters and covenants that laid the foundation for America's Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. It set the direction for this Nation, reading in part:

*"...having undertaken, for the glory of God, and advancement of the Christian faith..."*

Of the original 102 Pilgrims, 49 died during the first year. Although enduring severe hardships after their arrival in America, the Plymouth Colony established the original day of Thanksgiving in the following year of 1621 in order to thank God for the provision of food that would see them through the upcoming cold New England winter. Three hundred and twenty years later, on December 26, 1941, House Joint Resolution 41, dated October 6, 1941, was signed into law. Thus, beginning in 1942, the fourth Thursday in November, and every subsequent one, has been officially recognized in the United States of America as a day of giving thanks to the One to Whom it should be given.

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Between the seventeenth and twentieth century dates noted above, America's first "national" Thanksgiving occurred in 1789 with the commencement of the federal government. After completing the framing of the Bill of Rights, ratified on December 15, 1791, the first act was:

Mr. [Elias] Boudinot said he could not think of letting the session pass without offering an opportunity to all the citizens of the United States of joining with one voice in returning to Almighty God their sincere thanks for the many blessings He had poured down upon them. With this view, therefore, he would move the following resolution:

*Resolved*, That a joint committee of both Houses be directed to wait upon the President of the United States to request that he would recommend to the people of the United States a Day of Public Thanksgiving and Prayer. . . .

Mr. Roger Sherman justified the practice of thanksgiving on any single event not only as a laudable one in itself but also as warranted by a number of precedents in Holy Writ. . . This example he thought worthy of a Christian imitation on the present occasion.

That congressional resolution was delivered to President George Washington, who issued the first federal Thanksgiving proclamation, declaring in part:

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Whereas it is the duty of all nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to obey His will, to be grateful for His benefits, and humbly to implore His protection and favor. . . . Now, therefore, I do appoint Thursday, the 26th day of November 1789 . . . that we may all unite to render unto Him our sincere and humble thanks for His kind care and protection.

In 1863, President Abraham Lincoln issued a Thanksgiving proclamation setting aside the last Thursday of that November. Despite the difficult circumstances, Lincoln called Americans to prayer with an air of positive optimism and genuine thankfulness, noting:

The year that is drawing toward its close has been filled with the blessings of fruitful fields and healthful skies. To these bounties, which are so constantly enjoyed that we are prone to forget the Source from which they come, others have been added which are of so extraordinary a nature that they cannot fail to penetrate and soften even the heart which is habitually insensible to the ever-watchful providence of Almighty God. . . . No human counsel hath devised nor hath any mortal hand worked out these great things. They are the gracious gifts of the Most High God, Who, while dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath nevertheless remembered mercy.

So, in light of the above-noted statements and deeds that laid out the course of action and standards for America, what say you regarding how this great Republic is measuring up in 2013? Is Almighty God glorified by the actions of this nation? Is the Christian faith being advanced by the administrative, legislative and judicial branches of government at the federal, state and local

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levels? Is the Church significantly influencing secular society? To say that there seem to be a few “chinks in the armor’s integrity” would certainly be an understatement!

However, if we only look at the results of mankind’s efforts to meet the lofty goals set by our founders, despair will set in and thankfulness will diminish. Maybe our wise founding fathers knew that erosion along the way would be caused by our old sin nature, which cannot be redeemed by man’s laws, rules and regulations. To keep hope alive, it appears that their primary reasoning for the establishment of Thanksgiving was to redirect mankind’s focus away from individual circumstances and toward the Creator of heaven and earth.

Thus, understanding that human labors alone, sans God’s grace, will never maintain the uprightness of this great Republic, the Church or individual hearts, let us join together and refocus on the Source during this special season by spending four minutes at the website noted below, meditating on the words of “Oh, Holy Night,” which are sung by Evie Tornquist (Mrs. Pelle Karlsson). May the brief time taken to concentrate on the Reason for the season create deep-rooted thanksgiving in our hearts for God’s Provision. As this 2013 season of Thanksgiving – Christmas progresses, may every believer exhibit a renewed spirit, having a deeper understanding regarding the directions revealed by God and passed along by the foundational efforts of the Pilgrims, *et al.*

As always, your comments/thoughts are welcomed and appreciated.

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In His service,

Charles Angel

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FK5sqE8LoHc>