

Sermon
Deacon Carol Duncan

Thanksgiving Day
November 28, 2024

Considerations for Thanksgiving

Thank you for coming to church on Thanksgiving. We are not usually here on Thursdays. This remarkable day falls between the last Sunday of Pentecost in the old church year, and the first Sunday of Advent, in the new church year. We are in a time between times, in itself an occasion to be thankful for. It sums up our liminal time of waiting before our new rector is announced and welcomed.

I have a couple of things about Thanksgiving to share with you. First, Thanksgiving is America's holiday dedicated to being thankful. One way to enact gratitude is StoryCorps Great Thanksgiving Listen. The "Great Listen" encourages people of all ages to create an oral history of our times by recording a conversation with an elder, mentor, friend, or someone you admire. They have an app to do it and a great list of questions. I particularly like the series of questions about spiritual life. Examples are: can you tell me about your religious or spiritual beliefs? How has your faith evolved over time? What was the most profound spiritual moment of your life? Have you experienced any miracles? People around your table may enjoy sharing gratitude with that kind of conversation.

Another matter that, as your Deacon, I feel a need to mention is the popular idea of the first Thanksgiving. It was not, in fact, a completely benevolent meeting between the Puritans and the Wampanoag peoples of what we now call New England. Its origins involve the colonists who were aboard the Mayflower and the Native American people whose land they arrived to settle on. Although these groups formed an alliance for a time, the years that followed led to the unprecedented mass killing of Native American people and the seizing of their lands. For those descended from the ones who survived, it is not Thanksgiving – since 1970 it has been known as Indigenous peoples' National Day of Mourning. I'm glad we are learning to see that clearer version of history. I pray for growing understanding and peace among all the inhabitants of our country.

Regarding the Gospel and the day I intended to talk about, for most of us Thanksgiving is mainly about sharing our blessings in community. Jesus certainly wants us to be grateful for all the blessings that we take for granted. He sounds quite testy about it, asking why we

worry. Then he lists all the things he wants us to remember to be grateful for: our lives as we live them, our clothes, whether comfortable or dressy, the food we eat, particularly on this day of traditional feasting, our homes and families, our church home here at St. Martin's. We have so much to be thankful for this year.

Of course, we also have a great deal to trouble us in these days of political upheaval. I don't want to make you sit through a long sermon when you have the holiday to attend to. So I found a prayer that seems to respond to all Jesus' instructions and also to our troubled times. It was offered by Dr. Colleen Hanycz in January 2021 on her selection as the 35th president of Xavier University. Please join me in prayer.

Holy One of Blessing,

We asked for strength, and you gave us difficulties to make us strong.

We asked for wisdom, and you gave us problems to solve.

We asked for prosperity, and you gave us purpose and brains to use.

We asked for courage, and you gave us fears to overcome.

We asked for patience, and you gave us situations where we are forced to wait.

We asked for love, and you gave us troubled people to invite into community.

We asked for justice, and you called us to be just and to share our bounty with integrity.

Lord, we have received nothing that we asked for.

And yet, and yet, we have received everything we needed.

For this, we give thanks. Amen

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