
Blessed to Be a Blessing

**An article from the *Cathedral Times*
by Canon George Maxwell**

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. —
Philippians 4:7

We were gathered around the bed, looking at the gaunt figure of my father. He was looking back at us through his one good eye, returning his gaze every few minutes to my mother as if to make sure that she was still there. He had been holding her hand tightly for several days now through the rails of the hospital bed.

We had just given my father the news. Things were bad and getting worse. The time had come.

We had asked him if he wanted the doctors to do anything else. They had pills and needles that they thought would help. But, he had had enough. He knew his own body.

We told him that we loved him and then we asked him to bless us. He raised his hand and one by one my sister, my brother, my mother, and I leaned in over the bed as he made the familiar sign of the cross and put his hand on us. He was drawing only shallow breaths and we couldn't always make out what he was saying.

I had to force myself to breathe and to wipe away the tears. I wanted to see my father's face and to feel his touch. It was as if my life depended on what was happening in that moment.

Maybe this was the way it felt in the beginning when God created the world and declared that it was good.

Maybe this was the way it felt when Jesus came up out of the Jordan River and heard his father say, "You are my blessed child, in whom I take great delight."

I knew that my father knew me, all of us really. He knew what we looked like when we were being true to ourselves, and he knew what we looked like when we weren't.

I know now that he took delight in all of it, that we brought him joy, not because we had become something he wanted us to be, but just because we were his family.

After my father died, I went to see an old friend of his. Bishop Shipps had not been able to see my father while he was in the hospital and I wanted to tell him how things had gone. There were stories about my father that I thought he might want to hear.

As I got up to leave, the Bishop asked me to bless him.

I leaned over his wheelchair, and put my hands on him. I told him that my father loved him. Struggling to find my voice, I told him that he had been a blessing to all of us—to my father, to our family, and to the Church. And then I made the sign of the cross over him.

That's the point of it all, really.

We have been blessed so that we can be a blessing to others. We have been given life so that we can share it.

It's not always easy, of course.

As we struggle to find a way through the political wake of our recent elections, we are experiencing just how hard it can be to stay in relationship with others, while still saying what we need to say and doing what we need to do.

We are experiencing what it feels like to be called to bless those who threaten us and in many cases don't even want our blessing.

Maybe now is a good time to remind ourselves that we have been blessed.

Maybe now is a good time to remember those who have given us life.

Maybe now is a good time to feel that God delights in all of us.

Have a blessed Thanksgiving!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "G Maxwell, Jr." The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "G" and a trailing flourish.