
Thanksgiving and Not Its Opposite

**An article for *The Cathedral Times*
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I don't want to write the name of the opposite in my title. Thanksgiving has an opposite, and I refrain from mentioning it too much. But here it is: the opposite of thanksgiving is complaint. Enough said.

But I do like to talk a lot about thanksgiving. Yes! To give thanks is the most liberating of human activities! To be able to wake in the morning with thanks! To tune one's soul to the joy of the earth! Yes, the mere sunrise, wherever it is, can inspire thanks. To walk through the day with thanks! To rest easily in the evening with thanks! The mere sunset, wherever it is, can inspire thanks.

Thanksgiving sets us free! Oh, to be able to give thanks for other people! Oh, to realize the tenderness and strength of people. Oh, to see mercy in people. Oh, to see love in people. I give thanks for that experience.

Thanksgiving is the transmittal of positive energy into the world. It starts with ourselves, by receiving thanks into our hearts. But we continue the circuit when we deliver that thanks to others. Some of us have even known the experience of giving thanks in the midst of sorrow. Thanksgiving can actually change the world around us.

We give thanks for daily food, no matter what it is. We give thanks for rest, whenever it might come. We give thanks for the person next to us. We give thanks for the driver next to us.

Yes, there is always something to complain about. But, if so, there is also always something to give thanks for!

Churches, too, can be known in one of two ways. One type of church, or any community, is the community that gathers around common complaint. It might be complaint against the world. It might even be complaint about sin. Surely the world, and sin, provide us plenty to complain about.

But a second type of church, or any community, gathers around common thanks. The community that gathers around thanks, communicates a mysterious kind of joy and good faith. The Christian Church, at our best, gathers around thanksgiving, not complaint.

On this Thanksgiving week in our country, I hope each of us finds a place of thanksgiving. I pray that each of us finds a community, or family, or parish, or church, where we can rest in thanks. Where we can rest from the worry, even rest from the world and sin, and give thanks for people and life.

I used to sing a praise chorus that simply repeated Psalm 92:1, "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord." It is still fun to sing it! And, every Sunday, sometimes every day, I gather in a eucharistic community where the celebrant says, "Lift up your hearts." We respond, "We lift them to the Lord." Then, the celebrant says, "Let us give thanks to the Lord our God." We respond, over and over again, "It is right to give God thanks and praise."

Yes, it is meet and right, and our great joy, our great delight, to give thanks. This Thanksgiving, may we be set free in thanksgiving!



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