

## PASTOR'S COLUMN

### *We Give Thanks*

On Thursday, our nation will celebrate Thanksgiving. The first Thanksgiving occurred around 1620 when European settlers in North America gathered with Native Americans to give thanks to God for a plentiful harvest after a bitter cold winter. President George Washington proclaimed Thanksgiving a holiday in 1789, writing, "Whereas it is the duty of all nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God and to be grateful for His benefits, I hereby designate in our nation a day of thanksgiving to God."

Thanksgiving became a *national* holiday by presidential proclamation of Abraham Lincoln in 1863. Lincoln set Thanksgiving on the final Thursday in November, explicitly mentioning the abundant bounties that God had continued to shower on the nation after the division and hurt brought on by the Civil War.

From this brief historical perspective, it is clear that Thanksgiving has religious significance. It did not originate from abstract feelings of thankfulness, but from an explicit understanding that God is the source of all blessings.

At my family's Thanksgiving gathering each year, before we eat, we gather in a circle with joined hands and offer up prayers of gratitude to God. I have heard prayers of thanksgiving for family, friends, faith, food, freedom, provision and health. After we finish our thank-you prayers, we say grace.

I hope your family finds a way to keep the religious spirit of the holiday as you celebrate Thanksgiving this year. And a reminder: we will have Thanksgiving Day Masses at St. Francis at 6:30 am, 8:00 am and 10:00 am. Feel free to bring bread and wine for blessing and use at your family meal.

Finally, here is a Thanksgiving prayer-poem to share with your loved ones. Happy Thanksgiving to all from me, Fr. Thien and our Parish and School Staff! Fr. Joe

***O Lord, we ask Your blessing on the turkey and the dressing, on the yams and cranberry jelly, and all the things we bought from the deli. Bless the pumpkin pie and tea; bless each and every calorie. Let us enjoy Thanksgiving dinner; tomorrow we can get thinner. For all thy help along the way, we're thankful this Thanksgiving Day. We are thankful for all our dear ones, for all the far way and near ones. Although we may be far apart, we are together in the heart. Keep us in thy loving care; this is our thanksgiving prayer. Amen.***