

Thank God, and Someone

The appointed day of thanksgiving is here. It was initiated by colonists, proclaimed by Presidents and honored by Americans since the inception of this great nation.

One of the first Thanksgiving observances in America was entirely religious and did not involve the feasting that has become traditional. On December 4, 1619, there were 39 English settlers who arrived at Berkeley Plantation on the James River near what is now Charles City, Virginia. The group's charter required that the day of arrival be observed annually as a day of thanksgiving to God.

The first New England Thanksgiving was celebrated less than a year after the Plymouth colonists had settled in the new land. The first dreadful winter in Massachusetts had killed nearly half of the members of the colony. But new hope grew in the summer of 1621. The corn harvest brought rejoicing. Governor William Bradford decreed that a three-day feast be held.

The colonies adopted a government, and the nation has shown dramatic growth since that occasion. The reasons for thanksgiving have multiplied, too. Some of them are worthy of sharing together as we assemble with family and friends throughout the holiday weekend.

Be thankful for America. The dream carried by those colonists has evolved into the greatest nation the world has ever known. Be proud of its accomplishments. Support its ideals. Wear its label of citizenship proudly.

Be thankful for freedoms. The right to worship, to speak freely, to petition for correction of grievances, to assemble, to print facts and opinions, to pursue happiness – these are precious gifts that are beyond the wildest imaginations of much of the world. Their protection must be our constant endeavor.

Be thankful for family, where shared lives take on new meaning and fulfillment, and wherein the hope of civilization resides. The devotion of parents and the dependence of a child – an arrangement cemented by selflessness – make the family a sacred relationship. Nourish it.

Be thankful for love. This quiet, moving, powerful, seeking force flows and ebbs – as does the mighty ocean tide – and bobbing in its waves is the very destiny of mankind. It may be expressed in the tenderness between a man and a woman, warm and intimate, or it may be evident in the affection of friendship, loyal and enduring. Or perhaps it shows in national unity or world brotherhood. Love is a flame that must be fanned – in marriage or in a partnership of people and countries.

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Be thankful for memories, precious and abiding – golden moments that are life's buried treasure.

Be thankful for hope, that throbbing anticipation of new and greater experiences still to come, of desires yet to be fulfilled. It is the one feeling that transforms a drab and routine existence into one of vibrancy and meaning.

Be thankful for faith. An unquestioning belief in God is imperative if man is to understand himself and the reason for his being – if he is to be happy and content within his soul. The giving of thanks should be directed to the Creator first and foremost. Then faith in others and oneself should be practiced, too.

So, thanksgiving this weekend should include the expression of gratitude to relatives and friends – those individuals who make our lives richer. Thank someone across the table or in the living room or the office for their love and friendship and influence on your life.

Try it: Thank God and someone else who is special to you. That's what Thanksgiving Day is all about.

--Beecher Hunter