

Thanksgiving . . . a Eucharistic Day!

By Father Robert Kennedy
Diocesan Liturgy Director

The faith of our fathers is living still, in spite of holiday travel, football games, and Macy's parades. In many parishes, Thanksgiving Day is becoming a day for assembling as a family at the eucharistic table, to give thanks for the bounty of our lives and land. For American Catholics, it is a natural holy day.

It has been a great gift to us, then, to have a Votive Mass for Thanksgiving Day provided in the Lectionary and Sacramentary. A selection of 18 readings and responses, along with presidential prayers and a special Preface (P 84), encourages the American Church to celebrate this day by worshipping the Father from where we are — an American people alive in a rich heritage, aware of our many blessings, and responsibly moving into the future. It is not a day to use the eucharistic liturgy as an excuse for flag-waving or superficial patriotism: the liturgy reflects clearly that it is a day of eucharistic praise and deep gospel challenge.

Throughout the prayers of the Mass and many of the readings, God is worshipped as the Lord of creation, the source of all power and good gifts, the liberator who brings us out of bondage. He is the one who makes a promise to his people, and faithfully accomplishes it, even in our own day and with us, his people. It is clear that the God of Thanksgiving Day is the Lord of all creation, all nations serving him alone.

The Preface is a powerful reminder of our founding — not so much as a new people, but as a people of faith. It is true that our American founding fathers — from John Carroll to Cotton

INSIGHTS On Pastoral Liturgy

Mather — set us out in new directions for nation and faith. However, we are also heirs of the promise given our fathers in faith, Abraham, Moses and David, and that promise is still operative in us today as we move into the future. This is the power of God's work in us — a work for which we give thanks, but a work not yet completed or perfected in our time.

This leads to the most striking feature of the votive Mass: the way in which gratitude is expressed. Our gratitude for God's good gifts is not the final act of love we make as his people in faith. Gratitude is meant to open our hearts in concern for others, sharing our gifts in loving service, reaching out in love (Opening Prayer). The perfect sharing of Christ serves as a model for bringing about this unity in the human family (Prayer over the Gifts). The bounty of the Lord points up our negligence in sharing our gifts with others (Prayer after Communion). Our gratitude, then, is complete only when we have extended ourselves in caring service.

This perhaps is why so many parishes are developing special Masses for this day. There is the feeling that we must not only remember the benefits of American society and the blessings of the year's harvests, but also celebrate the emerging evidence of dedicated service through the work of parish committees and organizations, an emerging consciousness of our need to be joined in unity to

achieve the high ideals that are part of our heritage of faith and of country. We are overcoming, however slowly, the needs of the people around us.

Thus, the Thanksgiving Day liturgy becomes very important. It serves as a summit of praise and thanks for bountiful harvests and the gift of family, and as a day of restful achievement. It is also the source that incites us to reverent service for dispensing our harvests responsibly, healing family and labor relations, and enabling full dignity of human persons.

Thanksgiving Day is a day of consummate gratitude, a deeply eucharistic day, a day of unity, blessing, challenge. Let us give thanks to the Lord!

DR. RUBY SHIFTED

Honolulu — Richard Kent Rudy, MD, has been transferred to the Public Health Service Outpatient Clinic here. Doctor Rudy is a member of the commissioned corps of the Public Health Service, and had spent the past year in San Francisco at the Department of Surgery of the "Marine Hospital."

He is graduate of McQuaid Jesuit High School, in 1965, and also of Georgetown University.

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