

PASTORAL PERSPECTIVE

By Bishop Joseph L. Hogan

To Give Thanks Is Right and Just

The Eucharistic prayer has always proclaimed gratitude to the Lord as not only the decent thing to do but something demanded in justice to be offered any day and every day and in any place and every place.



To the exhortation "Let us give thanks to the Lord" comes the response "It is truly right and just always and everywhere to give thanks to the Lord our God."

Our capacity for gratitude is a measure of our faith in the Holy Spirit Who constantly prompts us to utter expression of thanks for blessings received. The Creative Spirit calls us to proclaim the most creative of human utterances. Who of us have ever heard words that better lifted our sagging spirits and filled us with new hope and life than 'thank you'?

We all need special Thanksgiving days to remind us that we should always and everywhere be thankful to Him who is the Source of all of our blessings. Our Heavenly Father had this in mind when He legislated days, weeks and years of celebration to teach His people the 'thank you' habit.

It is the Eve of Thanksgiving 1977 and five days before the Eighth Anniversary of my ordination as the seventh Bishop of the Diocese of Rochester. I have much for which to be grateful and I sense the need to give expression to my gratitude.



"The Thankful Poor," by Henry Ossawa Tanner (1859-1937)

"Thank you, Lord, for this special day that quickens my memory. I find it all so easy to forget my total dependence upon you, the Giver of all gifts. For what have I that I have not received?

I have lived, Lord, at the open end of the cornucopia of your blessings.

At times I find myself grasping at your gifts as something I have a right to expect.

In the spirit of your Apostle Paul who challenges me "Dedicate yourselves to thankfulness" Col. 3:15 I pray:

LORD JESUS, I proclaim the emptiness of my being. I beg forgiveness for my moments of self-assertion in which I announce my own sufficiency to move mountains. I am helpless without you.

I seek your forgiveness for the many times that I have been so absorbed in my own selfish dreams and plans that I was among the 'other nine' who did not return to say 'thank you.'

LORD JESUS, I thank You for these great blessings in my life:

Humbly am I grateful for —

my parents who first taught me to say 'thank you.'

for my family and my dearest friends

for my health and vocation

for my Faith

for Your eucharistic presence which St. Augustine claims to be the exhaustion of your goodness

for the clothes on my body and the home I can call my own;

FOR — others my age are homeless or without parents or friends or are ill,

crippled, jobless, or poor and hungry and worse — without Faith or without a sense of purpose in life:

BUT FOR YOUR GRACE, O LORD, I WOULD BE ONE OF THEM.

I THANK YOU FOR THE LAST TIME I BEHELD:

a glorious sunset

a baby's smile

a deep-red rose

a friend's face

the sun rising at each new day

BECAUSE I AM NOT BLIND;

ACCEPT MY ABIDING GRATITUDE FOR THE LAST TIME I HEARD:

a child's laughter

my favorite song

a compliment

church bells

singing birds

BECAUSE I AM NOT DEAF;

THANKS FOR THE LAST TIME I FELT:

a warm handshake

a child's hug

a balmy wind in my face

BECAUSE I AM NOT ILL OR ISOLATED;

THANK YOU, DEAR LORD, SO SENSITIVE YOURSELF TO GRATITUDE AND INGRATITUDE FOR:

the times I failed to thank You

the times I forgot to thank You for life itself, and for all blessings —

GREAT AND SMALL; LET ME BE SO GRATEFUL, HENCEFORTH.

that my life will be a "thanks-living" daily sensitive to these little things that make life worth living;

LET ME NEVER BE SO BUSY PLANNING THE FUTURE OR REGRETTING THE PAST

that I fail to accept the 'now' moments of sharing and struggling that are at the very heart of life;

AND, LORD JESUS, I, JOSEPH, CALLED TO LEADERSHIP IN YOUR CHURCH, THANK YOU:

for Your Holy Spirit Who breathed on me the fullness of Your Priesthood

for Your breath that challenges me each day to set aside my fears and to venture forth on courses UNCHARTED

for Your Fire which invites me to burn away my selfish interests and which lights the path to my renewal and the renewal of Your Church.

I THANK YOU FOR THE VOICES YOU HAVE DIRECTED TO SPEAK TO ME —

for voices that have affirmed me when in doubt for prophetic voices that have been near me to correct my erring steps and for voices lifted in prayer each day on my behalf.

AND FINALLY — I THANK YOU —

for all the blessings I have failed to sense and for all the blessings I do not recall this day. AMEN