

Thanksgiving

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ed. Some Catholic immigrants were motivated to reject the day upon remembering practices in their homelands.

"The Germans were reminded of the anti-Catholic laws that drove them to (emigrate to the United States)," Kauffman observed. "They saw a lot of practices as coming from anti-Catholic Protestants."

Another group that was uneasy with the holiday was the Irish, Kauffman continued.

"Some Irish who were sensitive to British imperialism and cultural domination could see this as a continuation of that domination," Kauffman said. "This holiday came out of Puritan tradition, a tradition they regarded as oppressive. It was the Puritans under Oliver Cromwell that oppressed Ireland."

All these fears gradually gave way, however, and today Catholics are as caught up in the celebration as anybody. Many parishes plan services to mark Thanksgiving Day; Catholics join in on service projects to help the poor; and people enjoy the feasting that marks the day.

In doing so, they continue traditions that existed in 1868. The Nov. 28, 1868 issue of the *Rochester Democrat* reported: "Thanksgiving day was very generally observed in Rochester. Places of business were closed, and our streets were as quiet as on Sunday. Probably on no similar occasion was business so universally suspended. Large and noisy gatherings were not in vogue, it was a day of home enjoyment."

The days around Thanksgiving Day were also marked by charitable works, according to the *Rochester Democrat* - likewise continuing a tradition of such activities in connection with the day.

The newspaper reported that turkey dinners were organized for the "inmates of the House of Refuge, Insane Asylum, and Alms House." Chickens and turkeys

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*We should not let
Protestants surpass
us in our
expression of
loyalty and
devotion to our
country.*

Cardinal Gibbons

"were sent to the Industrial school for a Thanksgiving dinner for the children." In addition, "The ladies are making extensive preparations for the Thanksgiving party of the benefit of the Rochester City Hospital."

The people in 1868 were continuing a pattern of celebration that actually predated the Puritan's feast in October, 1621, which has become the prototype for Thanksgiving celebrations ever since. The "American Book of Days," notes that the first Thanksgiving Day service in the United States was actually held on Aug. 9, 1607, in a short-lived colony in what is now Phippsburg, Maine. But the Puritan celebration some 14 years later is considered to be the first "official celebration."

In organizing this celebration, however, Puritans were themselves actually continuing a tradition of holding a harvest feast. The ancient Greeks celebrated a nine-day feast in honor of Demeter, their goddess of agriculture, and the

Romans held a similar feast in honor of Ceres. Since biblical days, Jewish people have held the feast of Tabernacles in October.

Though not on any set date, the Puritan feast continued in New England. Gradually, the feast spread along with settlers to other colonies. Local and colonial (and later state) governments regularly called for "days of thanksgiving." That practice was continued by the Continental Congress to celebrate successes during the Revolutionary War.

The movement for a permanent national celebration continued until 1863, when President Lincoln, following the Union's victory in the Battle of Gettysburg, called for a day of thanksgiving on the last Thursday in November. Every year thereafter, by presidential proclamation, Thanksgiving Day was celebrated - generally on the last Thursday in November. In 1941, Congress officially designated Thanksgiving as the fourth Thursday in November.

Ironically, as Thanksgiving Day became an established national holiday, it began losing some of its religious underpinnings to which Catholics had objected.

"In the second half of the nineteenth century, however, fewer and fewer descendants of the Puritans were troubling themselves to attend church on thanksgiving, or on any other day," Appelbaum wrote. By the 1880s, while Catholics debated about Thanksgiving services, Protestant churches were drawing worshippers to their services, leading to joint celebrations among a number of denominations, she observed.

Today, Thanksgiving is still marked by family celebrations, food collections for the poor, and church services. Concerns about the day's adverse effects are no longer voiced - except perhaps by health experts who warn about revelers eating too much.

And perhaps this year Catholics might consider adding thoughts of Cardinal Gibbons and his efforts on Thanksgiving's behalf to their prayers of gratitude.

The Boys Choir of Harlem to sing at Dec. 4 fundraiser

BRIGHTON - The Boys Choir of Harlem, whose members recorded the Grammy-winning soundtrack for the movie "Glory," will perform at the Eastman Theatre, 64 Gibbs St., on Sunday, Dec. 4, at 3 p.m.

The choir's performance is sponsored by the Founders Club of the Sisters of Mercy of Rochester. Proceeds will benefit the continuing education of the sisters.

In addition to frequently appearing on television, the choir - under the direction of nationally known educator, conductor and tenor Dr. Walter Turnbull - has performed at the White House and toured the United States, Europe and Japan.

Glen Campbell and Eddie Murphy are among the artists who have worked with the choir, which has also contributed to the soundtracks for the movies "Malcolm X" and "Jungle Fever."

The choir will sing selections ranging from gospel spiritual to ragtime to classical in style. In 1993 the choir performed its own Broadway show titled, "The Boys Choir and Friends - Live on Broadway," which also featured Michael Bolton and Phylicia Rashad.

Heralded by New York's *Daily News* as "the finest of its kind," the choir features 300 young men and women in its various singing programs. Former members include artists, attorneys, doctors and stockbrokers.

The choir, which also performed for Nelson Mandela when he visited the United States after his release from a South African prison, has recently released its first album, "The Sound of Hope." Interweaving dance grooves and introspective ballads with a soulful slide and the choir's soaring harmonies, "The Sound of Hope" reflects the wide range of emotion the choir expresses through its music.

Tickets for the show are \$29.50, \$24.50 and \$19.50. They are available at the Mercy motherhouse, 1437 Blossom Road. Phone orders will be accepted at 716/288-4817.

Pope: a day to reflect on relationship with creation

VATICAN CITY (CNS) - Thanksgiving is a time to reflect on humanity's relationship with creation and to pray in a special way for farmers, Pope John Paul II said.

The pope marked the Italian Thanksgiving Nov. 13 after his midday Angelus address. In Italy, Thanksgiving is a church-sponsored day of prayer focus-

ing on the country's agricultural sector.

Thanksgiving, the pope said, "asks believers to reflect on the fundamental relationship existing between human beings and creation, which is entrusted to them by God as a gift to be accepted with gratitude and responsible engagement."

"According to the Scriptures, work is

not only a means of sustenance, but helps people realize themselves as collaborators with the Creator," the pope said.

Agricultural work in particular is "a gift of God to the family," he said, because most farm work is a cooperative effort requiring the contribution of every family member.

Pope John Paul asked for prayers for those who "cultivate the earth" and asked for special signs of solidarity with Northern Italians affected by flooding in mid-November. Sixty-four people died and almost 6,000 were left homeless.

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Catholic Charities slates benefit bash at restaurant

IRONDEQUOIT - Community & Residential Services, a department of diocesan Catholic Charities, has scheduled a benefit bash at the Burger King restaurant at Irondequoit Mall this Wednesday, Nov. 30, from 5 to 8 p.m.

Burger King will donate 20 percent of each customer's total sale to Catholic Charities upon mention of the support for the agency.

Catholic Charities' Community & Residential Services serves developmentally disabled individuals in Monroe, Wayne and Yates counties. The agency also offers an AIDS Services program in Monroe County.

For information about the benefit bash, contact Barbara Poling at 716/328-3210, ext. 318.

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