

COLUMNISTS

How to create a thanksgiving mood

As much as I hate flying, several recent flights I took renewed my spirit of thanksgiving.

Instead of asking for my usual aisle seat, I have been requesting a window seat. I told myself, "Just muse and be alone with your thoughts."

On my first flight, the autumn colors were just beginning to show their glory. The plane I took was a "puddle jumper," staying close to the ground. Although space was tight, the magnificent view made up for it.

I immediately found myself thanking God for Mother Nature. As one lake after another passed below me, I began to think of all the fish in them and the wildlife that surrounds them. More awesome than this was the thought that God knows every fish, animal and insect by name and has created them for us.

On my second flight, I again rode a "puddle jumper," but the scenery this time was much different. Below me was one large farm after another. The harvesting was over, and farmers were



the
human
side

By FATHER EUGENE HEMRICK

preparing the soil for next year's crops.

Again, the spirit of thanksgiving filled me. I began to think: "Where in the world do we have so many enormous farms in one place? Where can you find soil like ours and the food it provides?" The answer came back, "Nowhere."

When you get into a thanksgiving mood, it tends to make your thoughts run. Suddenly, I recalled St. Augustine's treatise on the awesomeness of our memory.

In it, he reflects on what are labeled "portals." Through our eyes we drink in colors, images and every imaginable activity. Through our ears flow sounds which can make us happy, sad, passionate or tranquil. Those sounds can transport us into heaven, or put the fear of God in us.

Through the nose we enjoy sweet odors — perhaps the sweet scent of good food that lifts our spirits or of an ocean that gloriously refreshes us. Through the mouth we taste the delightful flavors God has put into food and drink. And with a kiss, we experience the taste of tastes — love.

After taking us from one "portal" to another, Augustine reflects on the memory and how, at a split second's notice, it can recall those lakes and the colors of nature, or the rich farmlands that dot a nation. He reminds us that not only can we recall places, but we can recall scents and how something tasted when we ate it. More fascinating than this, we can go back in time or

project into the future with our memory.

As these thoughts coursed through my mind, I could literally feel my sense of gratitude growing for all God has given us.

My sense of thankfulness didn't stop here, but kept running. I next recalled the spellbinding question of a spiritual writer who asked: "What must it have been like when God first thought of you, and you were created? What was that moment like, and why did God think of you and not someone else?"

This Thanksgiving if you don't quite feel the holiday spirit, look around and drink in God's creation. Reflect on your ability to be able to reflect, and then reflect on the moment God thought of you. My bet is that these thoughts will make your Thanksgiving one you will want to recall often with your beautiful God-given memory.

Father Hemrick is director of diocesan relations of the Catholic University of America.

End of world should not preoccupy us

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Luke 21:5-19. (R1) Malachi 3:19-20. (R2) 2 Thessalonians 3:7-12.

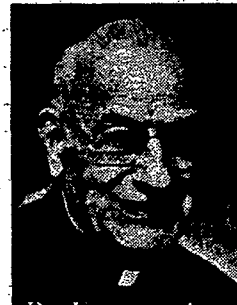
Next Sunday is the end of the church year, the feast of Christ the King. So on this Sunday the readings speak of the end of things.

The first reading is from the book of Malachi. The book was written around 450 B.C. in those difficult days between the return from the Babylonian Exile in 536 B.C. and the reforms of Esdras in 399 B.C.

The Jews were getting discouraged; reconstruction only inched along and some Jews were going over to the pagan style of life. Malachi sought to shore up their tottering faith by reminding them that the day was coming soon when God would consume the wicked like stubble; whereas the sun of justice with its healing rays would shine on those who feared his name.

The Gospel seems terribly complicated, but it isn't, if we treat it, like Malachi, as a here and now judgment.

Our Lord's discourse about the fall of Jerusalem was occasioned by his Apostles' infatuation with the splendor of the Temple. The Temple was one of the wonders of the world. Its pillars were 40 feet high, made from a single block of marble, like the columns in the Pantheon in Rome. The Temple dome was covered with thick plates of gold that blazed like a jewel in the setting sun. The rest of the Temple was of white marble



a word
for
sunday

By FATHER ALBERT SHAMON

that looked like a mountain of snow from the distance. The great bronze doors given by Herod were engraved with golden vines and grapes that symbolized Israel. When Jesus and his apostles walked to the Garden of Gethsemane, these engravings prompted Jesus to point to himself and say, "I am the true vine," not Israel.

Naturally, these Galilean fishermen were awestruck by this magnificent edifice. They were more impressed by the outside of the Temple than by what it stood for — the place of God's special presence among his people. So, when they prated about the exterior beauty of the Temple, Jesus shocked them by foretelling that this sumptuous edifice would be devastated soon, so that not one stone would be left on another. Forty years later the Roman armies of Vespasian and Titus destroyed Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

The historian Josephus described in great detail the siege and fall of Jerusalem. False prophets did arise, as

Jesus predicted. From A.D. 60 to 70, they spurred the Jews to revolt against Rome. "The time is at hand," they said. The people listened and Titus and Vespasian swooped down on the dove Israel. After a two-year siege, the inhabitants were reduced to cannibalism. One million perished, 100,000 were led into captivity, and 70,000 were crucified. The city and the Temple were leveled so that not a stone remained on a stone. Even today one can see the Arch of Titus in Rome commemorating this catastrophe.

Christians, however, escaped this terrible holocaust, for they listened to the warning of Jesus. When wars, famine, earthquakes, the abomination of the Temple occurred, they fled Jerusalem as Jesus had told them to do.

For a Jew the end of the Temple and of Jerusalem was the end of the world. What Jesus said to his own was that they would suffer much, but don't worry about the end for I will be with you.

Humorist Lewis Grizzard wrote about a farmer in his hometown named Luther Gilroy. While plowing, Luther thought he saw a sign in the sky that said THE END IS NEAR. So he let his mule and cow out of their pens, gave all his chickens away, and climbed on top of his house to await the end. When it didn't come, he pouted and refused to come down off the roof. Finally, his wife called the sheriff. He came and shouted up to Luther, "You idiot, I saw that same sign. It didn't say, 'The end is near.' It said, 'Go

drink a beer.' Come down off that roof before you fall off and break your neck."

So often people speculate about the end of the world. Often they just wait around. Jesus doesn't want his followers to sit by and do nothing while waiting for the end. We have work to do. "Oh," he said, "they will persecute you, imprison you, betray you and even put you to death." But Jesus promised that despite all not a hair of their heads would be harmed, that in losing their life they would find it. So he urged them to be patient, never to let the future frighten them, but to act in the present. As Paul said, "Be busy, but not busybodies."

Father Shamon is administrator of St. Isaac Jogues Chapel, Fleming.

Daily Readings

Monday, November 16
Revelation 1:1-4,2:1-5; Luke 18:35-43
Tuesday, November 17
Revelation 3:1-6,14-22; Luke 19:1-10
Wednesday, November 18
Revelation 4:1-11; Luke 19:11-28
Thursday, November 19
Revelation 5:1-10; Luke 19:41-44
Friday, November 20
Revelation 10:8-11; Luke 19:45-48
Saturday, November 21
Revelation 11:4-12; Luke 20:27-40

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