

Fr. Nick Dant's Homily, Saint Matthew Catholic Church, Indianapolis
Thanksgiving Day, Nov. 26, 2020, Cycle A

The Old Testament Book of Sirach proclaims: *And now, bless the God of all, who has done wondrous things on the earth; Who fosters people's growth from their mother's womb,... May he grant you joy of heart and may peace abide among you.* Traditionally, on Thanksgiving Day we Americans recall all the wondrous things God has done for us as a nation, how God has blessed us and favored us. We recall how over some 240 years of nationhood God has blessed us with natural resources, liberty, and the creative genius of our people. In the past we usually had no problem gathering around our Thanksgiving tables and bowing our heads in thanks. However, in this year of 2020, if we even dare to try to gather any family around our tables, we wonder and fear who may not be with us next Thanksgiving. The coronavirus and COVID-19 has wrought much devastation across our land and around the globe.

As we celebrate Thanksgiving in these precarious times, we also need to recall that our nation has not only been blessed but has been through other devastating times in our history too. We have experienced recessions, the great Depression of the 1930s, Civil War in the 1860s in which we were almost torn apart, and we suffered through two world wars. We have had our ethnic struggles, the curse of slavery and racial prejudice, and even the slaughter of Native American tribes. What do we need to be thankful for? As a people we came through every past struggle a more bountiful, stronger, and blessed nation. What do we have to be thankful for? We are an eclectic blend of peoples from every race, ethnicity, language, religion, and culture that makes us a resourceful nation; a nation which tries to learn from the struggles and sufferings of the past to form a more perfect union. In spite of the devastation wrought by the coronavirus and COVID-19, I feel we still have much to be thankful for, and our resourcefulness as a people will see us through the tragedy of the pandemic we are suffering now. Our history as a nation teaches us that we are a people of hope. We need to be grateful that we are a people of hope.

So, on this Thanksgiving Day 2020, let us take to heart the words of St. Paul; words of hope that God loves us and will see us through any tragedy we need to endure. As Christians we recall that in Jesus the grace of God has been bestowed on us. St. Paul says: *...in him you were enriched in every way...so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift, as you wait for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ. He will keep you firm to the end.* If we rely on the grace that is ours through Jesus, we can indeed be a people of hope. Yes, even on this Thanksgiving Day, when we have eaten our fill of turkey, dressing, mashed potatoes, and pumpkin pie, we should be thankful for God's grace and blessings.

In Gospel passage from Luke, Jesus heals ten lepers, but only one of the healed lepers bothers to return to Jesus, thanking God for the healing granted him. Jesus asks: *Ten were cleansed, were they not? Where are the other nine?* Even in the face of the coronavirus pandemic, let us not be tempted to be the like other nine. We must not give into despair! My friends, it is Thanksgiving Day! Let heed the Sirach and *...bless the God of all, who had done wondrous things on earth.* Let us be grateful to the Lord our God, who has blessed us so much from our nation to the gift of our faith in Jesus. Let us recall, remember, our hearts full of grateful praise.

May God bless you with a wonderful Thanksgiving, and with the bounty of His love through Jesus, who bestows the only true wealth – eternal life!