

Thanksgiving Day Homily

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today, our nation pauses for one simple but profound purpose: to give thanks. Long before Thanksgiving was a holiday, gratitude was at the heart of our faith. Scripture does not simply encourage gratitude; it commands it: **“In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus.”**

We often associate thanksgiving with abundance—tables full of food, families gathered, blessings overflowing. But the Gospel today reminds us that gratitude begins not in abundance but in awareness.

Ten lepers were healed, but only one returned to the Lord. What separated him from the other nine? Not the size of the gift, but the ability to see that God had acted in his life. He noticed. He turned back. He gave thanks.

Gratitude is the spiritual act of **“turning back”**—stopping in the midst of our busy lives to say, **“Lord, I see what You have done for me.”**

Many people come to Thanksgiving carrying heavy burdens—grief, loneliness, financial struggles, and strained relationships.

Christian gratitude does not ignore suffering. It does not pretend that everything is perfect. Instead, it chooses to look for God even there.

St. Paul wrote, **“Give thanks in all circumstances,”** not because every circumstance is good, but because God is good in every circumstance.

The Eucharist—the very heart of our faith—literally means “**thanksgiving.**” And it was instituted on the night Jesus was betrayed. Even then, He gave thanks.

This is our model: gratitude in the middle of the storm, not just after the storm is gone.

When we recognize that every good thing is a gift from God, something beautiful happens: the thankful heart becomes a generous heart.

It is no surprise that Thanksgiving naturally leads into a season of charity—helping the poor, feeding the hungry, caring for the lonely, supporting the mission of the Church. We give because we have been given so much.

The Samaritan leper didn’t just feel grateful—he returned to Jesus, fell at His feet, and praised God.

Gratitude always draws us back into relationship: with God, and with one another.

Today is not only about turkey and football—it is about returning. Returning to God with a heart full of thanks. Returning to one another in forgiveness, reconciliation, and love. Returning to what matters most.

So today, let us pause. Let us see. Let us return to the Lord with grateful hearts.

For the blessings that are obvious and the blessings we easily overlook...

For the people who love us and the people who challenge us...

For the grace that has carried us through this year—seen and unseen...

For the gift of faith, the gift of hope, and the gift of the Eucharist...

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Let us say with the Samaritan leper: **“Thank you, Lord.”** And may our gratitude today open our hearts, transform our spirits, and send us out as instruments of God’s generosity in the world. **Amen.**