

Give Thanks TO THE LORD

For Americans, Thanksgiving Day is a special day when we celebrate family unity. In fact, families get together on Thanksgiving more often than on any other holiday, including Christmas.

But besides the traditional family get-together and the big meal, there is also the religious meaning of the holiday that has been present since its origins. According to tradition, the pilgrims celebrated the first meal of thanksgiving in 1621 together with a group of natives to give thanks to God for the abundance of the harvests in the new world.

In 1789 President George Washington recognized an official holiday of "sincere and humble thanks." Later, in

1863, Abraham Lincoln proclaimed Thanksgiving a national holiday to be celebrated usually on the last Thursday of November.

Today, we celebrate Thanksgiving not only as a national holiday but also as a day symbolic for Catholics. After all, the word *Eucharist* comes from the Greek word, *eucharistein*, which means *thanksgiving*.



The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* reminds us that "Believing in God, the only One, and loving him with all our being has enormous consequences for our whole life" (#222). Then it adds that this includes "living in thanksgiving: if God is the only One, everything we are and have comes from him: 'What have you that you did not receive?' (1 Cor 4:7) 'What shall I render to the Lord for all his bounty to me? (Ps 116:12)'" (#224).

Although Thanksgiving is not a strictly a religious holiday, nevertheless because a eucharistic celebration is most appropriate the US Bishops encourage US Catholics to celebrate it with readings taken from the Mass "In Thanksgiving to God" found in the *Lectionary for Ritual Masses*.

Thanksgiving should not only be celebrated with a deep sense of prayer, gratitude and joy, but the celebration this day should lead us to remember that our lives are a continual thanksgiving through our daily activities, all of which should give glory to God, especially through the celebration of the Eucharist.



Thanksgiving at Home

For Christians, every Sunday is Thanksgiving Day, for the term *eucharist* comes from a Greek word which means “thanksgiving.” The American Catholic *Lectionary* includes an appendix with readings for Thanksgiving Mass. Perhaps it is fitting that Thanksgiving is not a mandatory feast, for gratitude is best served by voluntary expressions like the ones suggested below.

Give from Your Table: Numerous agencies, parishes, and food banks offer opportunities to feed the hungry at Thanksgiving. Give what you are able to support those efforts.

Bless Your Bread: Your parish may include a blessing of bread at its morning Eucharist. If not, families can bless their bread at home, extending hands over it before it is baked or served.

Count Your blessings: The Thanksgiving newspaper comes stuffed with Black Friday ads. Instead of starting your “wish lists” or shopping, make a family “thanks list” and read it aloud.

Say Grace before Dinner: Have each member place grain seed, stuffing cubes, or candy corn—symbols of God’s gifts—into a goblet. Then pass the goblet and have each person hold it while naming a blessing. Then say grace or read Psalm 67.

Celebrate the Eucharist: Most parishes have one morning Mass on Thanksgiving Day. The Eucharist is a graceful way to begin the day focused on God’s blessings in praise and thanks.



A Thanksgiving Day Prayer

Lord, we thank you for the goodness of our people and for the spirit of justice that fills this nation.

We thank you for the beauty and fullness of the land and the challenge of the cities. We thank you for our work and our rest, for one another, and for our homes. Accept our thanksgiving on this day. We pray and give thanks through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

—*Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers*

MORE ABOUT

Thanksgiving Day & The Church

Harvest festivals thanking God for favors received are common among all cultures and religions. Ritual feasts of thanksgiving to Yahweh were a vital part of the Israelite religion, which had two thanksgiving festival periods, one in the spring and one in the fall.

The Church has never had a feast dedicated specifically to thanksgiving—likely because thanksgiving is already an integral part of all liturgical celebration. But in the late Middle Ages in Europe, thanksgiving themes became part of the feast day of St. Martin on Nov. 11.

The history of Thanksgiving Day in the U.S. reveals that the observance was primarily Protestant in its origins, and that wide Catholic recognition and acceptance of the holiday came late.

Traditionally, the first Thanksgiving was thought to be a festival in the fall of 1621 at the Pilgrim settlement in Plymouth, MA. Pilgrim settlers and Native Americans celebrated a good harvest. By the 1660s, some New England communities were holding a Thanksgiving feast annually, but it was not until two centuries later that Abraham Lincoln set the last Thursday in November as Thanksgiving Day.

By the late 1800s, some Catholic priests forbade parishioners to celebrate what seemed to them a public Protestant festival. However, Cardinal James Gibbons of Baltimore allowed it.

During the 1900s, Catholics were marking Thanksgiving Day as many others were, with private family meals and celebrations, and, less so, by attending parades or other public events.

It was not until 1969 that the American Bishops Committee on the Liturgy prepared and published Lectionary readings and prayers for a Mass specifically for Thanksgiving Day.



Advent 2021

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>November 28</p> <p>Buy or make an Advent wreath. Bless it and light the first candle tonight and every night this week. Read Luke 21:25-28, 34-36.</p>	<p>29</p> <p>Advent is about waiting for the Savior to come. Offer a simple prayer of praise anytime you have to wait during Advent.</p>	<p>30</p> <p>The presence of Jesus reminds us to hope in God's mercy. Make a list of reasons for your hope today.</p>	<p>1</p> <p>Pick one habit that is keeping you from holiness. Identify your "go-to sin" and resolve to conquer it during Advent.</p>	<p>2</p> <p>Add 20 minutes of daily prayer during Advent. Set an alarm to remind you to pray for 10 minutes each morning and night this month.</p>	<p>3</p> <p>In gratitude that God provides for your needs, set aside gently used clothing and give it to the poor. Add a piece you love as a special sacrifice.</p>	<p>4</p> <p>Perform a thorough examination of conscience today. Then attend Confession to ready your soul to greet the Savior.</p>
<p>5</p> <p>At sundown tonight, light two violet candles in the Advent wreath and read Luke 3:1-6.</p>	<p>6</p> <p>St. Nicholas was a generous man and a courageous bishop. Today, make at least one generous act of love in his honor.</p>	<p>7</p> <p>In your Christmas cards write a note about the blessings you received this year as a witness to God's love.</p>	<p>8</p> <p>The feast of the Immaculate Conception celebrates Mary's freedom from Original Sin. Attend Mass and pray a Rosary.</p>	<p>9</p> <p>Today, let nothing discourage you in honor of St. Juan Diego. He never gave up, placing his trust in Jesus and His Mother.</p>	<p>10</p> <p>Buy Christmas gifts from stores or online merchants that carry "fair trade" items to support workers in developing countries.</p>	<p>11</p> <p>To honor the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe tomorrow, place a rose in a vase in your home and pray a "Hail Mary" whenever you pass it.</p>
<p>Gaudete 12 Sunday-Joy!</p> <p>Celebrate the halfway point of Advent. Light two violet candles and the rose one for joy. Read Luke 3:10-18.</p>	<p>13</p> <p>Spend time in silence today. Say "no" to unnecessary distractions. In silence and peace, you will be open to God's will.</p>	<p>14</p> <p>Think of Biblical accounts of God's mercy to sinners. Ask forgiveness from someone you have hurt and forgive those who wronged you.</p>	<p>15</p> <p>In honor of the Holy Family's trek to Bethlehem, pray for all those who have been forced from home.</p>	<p>16</p> <p>Send a card to someone who lost a loved one in the last year. Offer your thoughts and prayers for healing and comfort.</p>	<p>17</p> <p>Pray for the men and women in the armed services who won't be able to spend Christmas with their families.</p>	<p>18</p> <p>Pray the Angelus at 6:00 am, 12:00 pm, and 6:00pm every day until Christmas.</p>
<p>19</p> <p>Light all four candles in the wreath tonight and all week. Read Luke 1:39-45.</p>	<p>20</p> <p>This can be a sad time for those who are alone. Include anyone in your own gatherings who might be otherwise forgotten.</p>	<p>21</p> <p>As a gift to the coming Savior, repair a relationship with a friend or family member that needs healing.</p>	<p>22</p> <p>Make an effort to share God's love today. Say a kind word or listen with compassion to someone who is suffering.</p>	<p>23</p> <p>Gather friends and neighbors and Christmas carol (safely) at a nursing home or homeless shelter.</p>	<p>24</p> <p>Even if you live alone, put up and decorate a Christmas tree. Light it as a symbol of Christ, the Light of the World.</p>	<p>Rejoice! 25</p> <p>Read the story of Jesus' birth in Luke 2:1-20 and focus on each detail. Think of how joyful it will be to meet Jesus when he comes again.</p>

