

Thanksgiving Day ~ 24 November 2016 ~ 8:30 AM ~ Our Lady of Victory Parish Community ~ HOMILY

1st Reading:

Sirach 50:22-23

- "And now, bless the God of all, who has done wondrous things on earth; Who fosters people's growth from their mother's womb, and fashions them according to his will! May he grant you joy of heart and may peace abide in you; May his goodness toward us endure in Israel to deliver us in our days."

Responsorial Psalm:

Psalm 138 – *Sung*

2nd Reading:

1 Corinthians 1:3-9

- "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I give thanks to my God always on your account for the grace of God bestowed on you in Christ Jesus, that in him you were enriched in every way, . . . discourse . . . knowledge . . . as the testimony to Christ was confirmed among you, . . . 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, . . . God is faithful, and by him you were called to fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord."

GOSPEL:

LUKE 17:11-19

- "As he was entering a village, ten persons with leprosy met him . . . stood at a distance . . . "Jesus, Master! Have pity on us!" . . . "Go show yourselves to the priests . . . they were cleansed. . . one of them, realizing he had been healed, returned, glorifying God in a loud voice; . . . fell at the feet of Jesus and thanked him. He was a Samaritan. Jesus . . . reply, . . . "Where are the other nine? . . . Stand up and go; your faith has saved you."

I. Perhaps, many may know this . . . but for those that do not . . . truth be told, the very **first** Thanksgiving did not take place in Plymouth, Massachusetts . . . but in a place back then known as "Berkeley Hundred: "on December 4, 1619, a group of 38 English settlers arrived at Berkeley Hundred, comprised of about eight thousand acres . . . on the north bank of the James River . . . about 20 miles upstream from Jamestown, where the first permanent settlement of the Colony of Virginia was established on May 14, 1607.

The group's charter required that the day of arrival be observed yearly as a "day of thanksgiving" to God. On that first day, Captain John Woodleaf held the service of thanksgiving. Here is the section of the Charter of Berkeley Hundred which specifies the thanksgiving service:

"Wee ordaine that the day of our ships arrival at the place assigned for plantacon in the land of Virginia shall be yearly and perpetually kept holy as a day of thanksgiving to Almighty god."

Perhaps the piece of history that you and I know most is the one that took place in Plymouth, Massachusetts . . . the "Pilgrims", as they have come to be known, seeking religious freedom and a new prosperity . . . and traveling

across treacherous seas, with not all surviving . . . landed **after** the harvest had taken place

In fact, “The Pilgrims had arrived in 1620, . . . Arriving at Plymouth Colony—too late to grow many crops, and lacking fresh food, the Pilgrims suffered terribly during the winter of 1620–1621. Half the colony died from disease. The following spring, local Indians taught the colonists how to grow corn (maize) and other local crops unfamiliar to the Pilgrims, and also helped the newcomers master hunting and fishing.

Because they harvested bountiful crops of corn, barley, beans and pumpkins, the colonists had much to be thankful for in the fall of 1621. English Puritans had traditionally designated special days of thanksgiving to express gratitude for God’s blessings.

“The Plymouth settlers set apart a holiday immediately after their first harvest in 1621. They held an autumn celebration of food, feasting, and praising God.

And so, that event . . . that day is perpetuated . . . handed on to us, the benefactors of those who came to this country . . . who endured many trials but also many joys . . . but those, just the same, who never forgot the importance of being grateful . . . never forgot the source of the giver of all good gifts.

The single common thread throughout the history of this holiday has been “gratitude” . . . gratitude offered to the source and creator of all life . . . gratitude that overflows and . . . albeit, for at least a day, gratitude that has moved individuals to recognize most acutely the unseen God . . . and to reach out to others . . . sharing whatever they possess . . . intentionally coming together to do so . . .

II. You and I gather around our “table” of gratitude . . . not just today . . . but week after week . . . the table that represents the life that was sacrificed so that we might have life . . . life to the fullest . . . eternal life . . . we gather around this table of gratitude so that this very life that chooses to feed us . . . with more than mere food . . . and quench our thirsts . . . with more than mere drink . . . can also change us . . .

We gather around this table of gratitude as people who believe . . . filled with something greater than we are . . . sent away as individuals who are more than we were before . . .