

**THANKSGIVING DAY - 2015**  
**SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH**  
**FATHER JOHN ALTBERG**

*JAMES 1.16, PSALM 100*



**O GO YOUR WAY INTO HIS GATES WITH  
THANKSGIVING, AND INTO HIS COURTS WITH  
PRAISE; \* BE THANKFUL UNTO HIM, AND SPEAK  
GOOD OF HIS NAME.**

THANKSGIVING DAY leads traditionally to thoughts of the Mayflower Compact Pilgrims landing at Plymouth Rock (MA) in 1620. A bit of historical fact-finding reveals the first thanksgiving in America was at the Virginia settlement, Berkeley Hundred in 1619. Two years later, 1621, in Massachusetts was the event now generally regarded as the first Thanksgiving. Both followed European roots of a harvest festival...giving thanks for having enough to eat.

243 years later finds an established nation in the terrible Civil War struggle...leading a war weary, divided nation President Lincoln proclaims the day for which we now gather...The National Day of Thanksgiving... his proclamation includes this Lincolnesque eloquence...

**October 3, 1863**

**BY THE PRESIDENT  
THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.  
A PROCLAMATION (EXCERPT)**

The year that is drawing towards it's close, has been filled with the blessings of fruitful fields and healthful skies. To these bounties, which are so constantly enjoyed that we are prone to forget the source from which they come, others have been added, which are of so extraordinary a nature, that they cannot fail to penetrate and soften even the heart which is habitually insensible to the ever watchful providence of Almighty God. In the midst of a civil war of unequalled magnitude and severity...order has been maintained, the laws have been respected and obeyed, and harmony has prevailed everywhere except in the theatre of military conflict...

No human counsel hath devised nor hath any mortal hand worked out these great things. They are the gracious gifts of the Most High God, who, while dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath nevertheless remembered mercy. It has seemed to me fit and proper that they should be solemnly, reverently and gratefully acknowledged as with one heart

and one voice by the whole American People. *Abraham Lincoln, President*

152 years later we find ourselves torn by yet new strife...some would have us revise history, pretending President Lincoln never spoke those words...or should not have. Today is, for some, only about a day off...or sumptuous dining...or shopping...or football. Though none are intrinsically negative, everyone should first pause, meditate upon and daily apply the profound eloquence of Psalm 100...

O BE joyful in the LORD, all ye lands: \* serve the LORD with gladness, and come before his presence with a song.

Be ye sure that the LORD he is God; it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; \* we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

For the LORD is gracious, his mercy is everlasting; \* and his truth endureth from generation to generation.

St James wrote in today's Epistle..."Make no mistake, every thing comes ultimately from God." All things come from you O Lord; with thanks we are giving some back...the Offertory. We acknowledge what we have comes from God...we are just borrowing it to make our life...and the lives of others... better!

God is pleased to have loaned us everything...he just asks us to use them wisely.

President Lincoln noted, Thanksgiving finds its place quite naturally at the end of the year (secular and Church). The cycle of the Church is tied to the natural order of life...seeds are planted, grown and harvested for our use and then, if life is to be sustained, we must start again...having taken time to give thanks to God.

Consider not only the seeds planted which grow the things that sustain us but also the seeds of freedom that God planted through Jesus and how, properly nurtured, the world is sustained.

God tells us share what we have with others...our knowledge, our fortune, our, freedom, our future. Thank him for where we are on that path and let us pray for continued guidance in carrying out His mission.

