

Thanksgiving Day, 26 November 2020

Homily: Fr. Ken

Over the years, we come to love the “fixedness”, if you will, of Thanksgiving. Always on a Thursday, by proclamation, this holiday is unmindful of anyone’s inconvenience. Even Christmas Day must fall on a weekend some years, but never Thanksgiving.

It causes as much fuss as possible—a stir that disrupts the entire week, year after year.

Yet, when the last of the guests have arrived—family only, this coronavirus year—and everyone is seated at the table, there comes a pause, a toast, a grace, a prayer—long or short, vocal or silent—that says what this holiday is for. Thursday vanishes, and in its place is Thanksgiving.

It’s natural to look inward on this day, at the faces around the table, the private and personal rituals that make each family’s holiday its own.

It’s easy to forget that it remains Thursday on the rest of the planet. For this day, at least, America and Americans everywhere seem to cast off from the world at large, to stand apart for a few moments of contemplation.

Perhaps you know the feeling if you’ve ever lived abroad when late November comes. I remember it well, many years ago, as a student at the Catholic University of Louvain, living in Belgium. I experienced the way we Americans seek each other out on the holiday, the way we proselytize pumpkin pie, the way traditions we somehow took for granted suddenly find a new power to move us.

We dust off the Norman Rockwell corner of our hearts, which we didn’t even know existed, and I patiently explain to my fellow Flemish students the virtues of cornbread stuffing.

There is an adage that says "enough is as good as a feast". Today, we celebrate having enough by having the feast.

Over the centuries, thanks of every sort have attached themselves to this special day: thanks for deliverance from war, from loss, from suffering, from despair; thanks for increase and plenty, for duty and service, and fulfillment and enduring hope, for one generation succeeding another. That one meal can be so solemn, so joyful, so expressive.

And so, when we sit down for Thanksgiving dinner with family members, before we start to enjoy a fine meal, let us pause for a moment. Let us take time for grace. Bow our heads. Speak words of thanks. Thank each other for being there, remember the absent ones, and thank God for all good gifts and especially for all the good people who make our life truly special.

-Amen-