

The fourth Thursday of November was proclaimed a national day of thanksgiving

By President Lincoln in 1863.

We at the *midpoint* of a terrible civil war –

The poisonous fruit of our nation's original sin of *slavery*.

But even in the darkness of such tremendous civil strife, violence, and hardship,

The people were called to look to the *light* that seeks to

Penetrate *all* souls tempted to a *common* enslavement to darkness.

We've heard the expression:

It's better to light a *candle* than to curse the *darkness*.

And so, we take up the exercise of *gratitude* –

The deliberate *choosing* to give *thanks* to the Giver of *all* that is good in this troubled world –

We take up gratitude as our God-given *weapon* against the *enemies* of our life:

The enemy of *pride* –

That tries to tell us we don't *need* God – that we should go it on our *own*;

The enemy of *self-pity* –

Sucking us into the deathbed of discouragement;

The enemy of *envy* –

Defining our worth by how much we have or *don't* have in comparison with our *neighbors* –

Estranging us from *them* –

But *worse* – from our *true* selves – whose worth is rooted in the love of God

As our *only* enduring *asset*.

And the enemy of *self-entitlement* –

Another name for pride –

Where we think *ourselves* deserving of praise to the point we think God *owes* us.

The Gospel of the Ten Lepers appears only in *Luke*.

It was said that *10* were cleansed –

But only *one* was *healed*.

And *that* one was a *Samaritan*!

The deep-seeded *enemy* of the Jews Jesus was *preaching* to.

He was *warning* them of their *pride* –

*Blinding* them to God's healing presence standing right in *front* of them.

They thought they *deserved* God's goodness just by belonging to a particular *club*.

But God is the God of *all* –

*Regardless* of the labels and identities we wave around on our banners of *pride*.

We are all the *same* in that we are all in great *need* –

The need for *God* to give us life.

*Gratitude opens* the heart to that life.

*Lincoln* said:

*Gratitude* “ cannot *fail* to *penetrate* and *soften* the heart which is habitually *insensible* to the ever-watchful providence of Almighty God...”

So may we be *grateful* –

Ask for the *gift* of gratitude –

That healing *elixir* of a heart ever *hungry* for *God* to give it its true *food*.

God did a wonderful thing for all *ten* of those lepers – *cleansing* their bodies –

But only *one* was *healed* –

Only *one* opened their heart to God *Himself*.

His *gratitude* to our God *fed* his soul with an abiding *joy* –

A joy that *sees* us through darker times and struggles and sufferings –

A joy that no *lack* in life can *rob* from us.

For God is *with* us;

God is *for* us;

*Nothing* can get in the way of that fact –

Nothing but the lack of *gratitude*.

So let us *ask* for the healing gift of gratitude –

Asking for that *gift* – that *grace* – in our daily *prayers*.

And may we be ever *watchful* for opportunities to *practice* it.

*Lighting* that candle rather than cursing the darkness –

Looking for the little speck of *good* we can nurture –

Rather than get overshadowed by the darkness and poison of *bitterness* or despair.

May we *sow* the seeds of God's joy in loving *others* who seem to have *less* than us –

Giving *generously* from our hearts –

As *God* has *literally* given His heart to *us* on the cross of *salvation*.

And *remember* – every Mass is a time of thanksgiving and *praise* of God's goodness –

The gift of *Himself* in the *Eucharist* –

*Eucharist* being the Greek word for *Thanksgiving*.

May you be *blessed* this Thanksgiving Day with the *gift* of thanksgiving *itself*.

Throwing the *doors* of our hearts wide *open* to the love of God which endures *forever*.