

## TRY COUNTING YOUR BLESSINGS - A HOMILY FOR THANKSGIVING

If your old enough, you may remember that time-honored ballad sung by Bing Crosby in the movie "White Christmas?" It goes something like this: "If you're worried and you can't sleep, try counting your blessings instead of sheep. And you'll fall asleep, counting your blessings."

So many people in our modernist, progressive culture seem to be so anxiously tied up in knots, worrying about all sorts of concerns: their future, their families, their children, their health, the state of the economy, jobs, national security, and the list goes on and on... Even our young people, who are normally so optimistic, have now become so over-burdened and distraught by issues of poor self-image, acceptance, popularity, often living lives without purpose or direction, brought about by an underlying crisis of identity!

It seems that gratitude to God for all our blessings comes so easily when things are good and going smoothly, but can we still say "thank you" to God when things are not? When bad things happen, don't we ask, "Where is God in all of this?" Where is God when natural disasters happen, when so many can't find jobs, when babies and elderly are afflicted with serious illnesses, when 65% of all marriages end up in divorce and so many families are immersed in crises, and when our society is so preoccupied with narcissism, that it doesn't even care! Where is God when we feel we need Him the most, especially during times of confusion and turmoil, when struggling amidst darkness and despair?

We seem to spend so much time procrastinating about our trials, afflictions, and challenges, and so little time counting our blessings! When experiencing times of worry, and anxiety, shouldn't we stop these sour notes of needless anxiety, and start reflecting upon the words of this song, giving thanks to God for all the blessings we have received? Shouldn't we stop complaining about

the things we don't have and start focusing on the things we do! You see, God frequently permits hardships and afflictions to both chasten and challenge us; to purify us, and often to move us in a different direction, in conformity with His will. God may redirect us even by our mistakes and failures! It has been said that trials and hardships often provide us with opportunities to both exercise and practice our faith, as well as helping to discern the real priorities in our lives.

Patient endurance amidst pain and suffering is indeed the highest form of prayer. In fact, persevering amidst all of our sorrows and afflictions, while also expressing our gratitude for the blessings of our faith, may just provide us with the key that unlocks the door to our peace, our serenity, even our salvation! If that's the case, be grateful for your trials and try to understand their purpose! God only permits that which is good for us. To those of you who are suffering, endure your trials patiently, for our time on earth is short and the joys of heaven eternal!

Finally, genuine gratitude is a great sign of humility, a sign of submission to God's will, a virtue we just can't get enough of. It's the pathway to a more positive attitude, and the key to greater serenity. And it gives us a greater sense of security, especially when we recognize and acknowledge God's sovereignty in our lives. Gratitude is at the root of what it means to love. It helps us to keep things in their proper perspective, with God first, last, and always as the center of our lives. As St. Paul wrote in his letter to the Colosians, "Whatever you do, in word or deed, do it in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God the Father, through Him."

God bless you all and have a happy Thanksgiving  
Deacon Jack Sullivan