

**HOMILY OF HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL CHRISTOPHE PIERRE
APOSTOLIC NUNCIO TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

**HOLY MASS FOR THANKSGIVING DAY
CHURCH OF THE LITTLE FLOWER
BETHESDA, MARYLAND
NOVEMBER 28, 2024**

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Happy Thanksgiving! Thank you, Monsignor Vaghi, for inviting me and the members of the household of the Nunciature to join you and your parish at this Mass and to celebrate this joyful American holiday. On behalf of the Holy Father, in the words of St. Paul from the second reading: “Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

+ + +

What do we mean, as Christians, when we talk about “thanksgiving”? It is expressed well in one of the Prefaces to the Eucharistic Prayer, where the priest says to God:

“It is...our duty and our salvation...to give you thanks. For, although you have no need of our praise, yet our thanksgiving is itself your gift, since our praises add nothing to your greatness but profit us for salvation.”¹

Notice what the prayer says about giving thanks. God *has no need* of our thanksgiving. Rather, giving thanks to him is actually a benefit to us for our salvation. And so, when Jesus asks in the Gospel, “Where are the other nine?”—it’s not as if the Lord *needs* the people to thank him in order to satisfy his own ego. His concern is for the people themselves. Do those who were cleansed of their affliction understand the deeper significance of their healing? Are they aware that the One who has healed them of their leprosy is offering them something even greater: the beauty of knowing the Christ, of being friends with him, and of discovering in him the ultimate meaning of their lives? The Gospel says that all ten lepers were “cleansed”, but only the one who returns to give thanks is said to be “saved”. This

¹ *Roman Missal*, Common Preface IV.

is the difference that thanksgiving makes! When we make a practice of giving thanks to God, we are entering a *relationship* with the One whose healing action in our lives is the sign of something greater: an invitation to a life with a new and eternal meaning.

As people whose lives have been touched by Christ, we should hope that the physical and material blessings which Christ gives us are never “enough” to satisfy our longing; because the Lord of all glory wants to give us more than this! He wants us to return to him with a desire, not only for gifts, but for a *relationship* with him which gives our life “a new horizon and a decisive direction”.²

Many Christians, who live a life centered only on duty, obligation, and their own works, do not realize that Christ has a heart that is thirsting for our love. It is true that God has no “need” for our love in an absolute sense. He is God. He has everything. But by becoming man and taking on a human heart, God has made himself vulnerable with us. Christ, because he has a human heart, is capable of suffering from our neglect—such as when the Apostles kept falling asleep in the Garden of Gethsemane.³ But for the same reason, Christ is also able to be consoled by our love for him. When we love him, when we express our gratitude to him, when we draw close to him—we are quenching his thirst. And this transforms our lives.

+ + +

Dear brothers and sisters, it is a good thing that we are here, on Thanksgiving Day, to celebrate this Eucharist together. Every Eucharist is an act of thanksgiving. As we make our prayer, as we present the offerings at the altar, the bread and the wine, remember to offer your own life to the Lord. Thank him for the things he has done for you, for your family, for the Church. And remember that these gifts he has given are only the sign of a greater gift: an invitation to be a friend of Christ, to be someone who consoles his heart, and to walk closely with him on the path of salvation into the fullness of life.

² Pope Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Deus Caritas Est* (25 December 2005), 1 ; cited by Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (24 November 2013), 7.

³ Cf. *Matthew* 26:40.