

“On October 3, 1863, Abraham Lincoln issued a proclamation. It called all Americans to acknowledge their gratitude for God’s many blessings. Even though America was still in the midst of the Civil War, the sixteenth president had recently experienced a personal dimension to his faith in Christ. In spite of continued conflict, he felt compelled to invite recipients of God’s faithfulness to appropriately respond. The proclamation led to the establishment of our Thanksgiving holiday.

“Lincoln was not the first to call for a national expression of gratitude to God for His goodness. Governor William Bradford formally called the Pilgrims to esteem the Almighty with worshipful hearts in what we now acknowledge to be the very first Thanksgiving in 1623. George Washington took his cue from Bradford and in 1789 proclaimed a national day of gratitude.

“It’s no wonder there have been multiple Thanksgiving proclamations. The principle is timeless. Recognition of God’s gracious activity in our lives demands an appropriate response. Blessings require bowing before the One from whom they originate . . . ”

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COUNTING OUR CORNUCOPIA OF BLESSINGS

“Dear Heavenly Father,

“As we gather together to count our blessings, 381 years after the first Thanksgiving Day, we realize how little appreciation we have expressed for this Thy bounty:

“For sunbeams and sunsets and sun-kissed cheeks, for rainbows and raindrops and rain sticks, for mountain dew and prairie frost, for harvest moons and shooting stars, we give Thee praise.

“For Blueberry Hill and Blackberry Creek, for Apple Valley and Orange County, for Plum Borough and Peachtree City, for Pineapple Park and Coconut Grove, we give Thee praise.

“For coal miners and construction workers, for truckers and bakers, for mail sorters and short-order cooks, for ranch hands and stage hands, for accountants who keep honest books, for politicians who keep their promises, for stay-at-home moms and double-shift dads, we give Thee praise.

“O God, our help in ages past, our hope for years to come, we thank You this day for *Proud to be an American* and *These Colors Don’t Run*, for *Let Freedom Ring* and *Of Thee I Sing*, for *Every Heart Beats True* and for *Courtesy of the Red, White and Blue*.

“For Purple Hearts and Bronze Stars, for Green Berets and Gold

Stripes, for the 10th Mountain Division and the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit, for the KC-130 Crew and the 101st Airborne Division, for the soldiers and SEALs and special forces who made the ultimate sacrifice this year, and for all who continue to protect and to serve, we give Thee praise.

“For the Border Patrol and citizens on patrol, for the National Guard and Guardian Angels, for the USO and the VFW, we thank You, O God, our Creator and Redeemer.

“For the Pentagon rebuilt and Ground Zero restored and the faith of a nation renewed, for *Semper Paratus*, and *Non sibi sed patriae*, for ‘Never forget’ and ‘Never surrender,’ for freedom from fear and freedom to dream, for free minds and free markets, for freedom with responsibility, we give Thee praise.

“For the Song of Solomon and the Prayer of St. Francis, for ‘the Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer,’ for ‘without vision we perish,’ for Proverbs 28, for John 3:16, for *The Old Rugged Cross*, for *The Solid Rock*, and for *What a Friend We Have in Jesus*, we offer eternal thanks.

“For ‘All men are created equal,’ for ‘Tear down this wall,’ for ‘Ask not what your country can do for you,’ for ‘Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty,’ for ‘I swear to uphold the laws of the United States of America, against

all enemies foreign and domestic,’ we give Thee praise.

“For iron will, for steely resolve, for mettle tested and time-worn, for uncommon valor that never sleeps, for steady hands, sturdy legs, broad shoulders, and level heads, for stiff upper lips, for blood, sweat and tears, for conquering our fears, and for unbending courage in the face of the unknown, we give Thee praise.

“O Father, we come to Thee on this national day to join with heart and voice all the people of our blessed land to honor and thank Thee. We ask you, Lord, as our forefathers did in times of strife, ‘to inspire our commanders both by land and sea, and all under them, with that wisdom and fortitude which may render them fit instruments, under the providence of Almighty God, to secure for these United States the greatest of all blessings: independence and peace.’

“For precious life itself in this great nation — under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all — we thank Thee, O Father. Amen.”

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