

## **GIVING THANKS**

When my mother was in Saint Francis Nursing Home, she was known as a very polite person. Even in her nineties, she was grateful for anything that was done for her. She would even thank the nurse for giving her the medication that she required. Nothing was too small for which to say “thank you.”

One of the things that good parents teach their sons and daughters early on is to say “thank you.” When the child is given something, the mother or father will usually remind with the words: “And, what do you say?” The lesson that is being taught is a basic one: you may not receive without being grateful. They go hand in hand. Later on in our lives, just saying “thank you” is not enough. We are to show that we are grateful with actions as well as words.

Our relationship with God is supposed to be one big act of giving thanks. We do it with Mass, within which we celebrate the Eucharist. The name “Eucharist” comes from the Greek and means thanksgiving. But, the giving of thanks is not limited to our attendance at church. As we are sent forth at the conclusion of Mass, we are sent forth to live out that spirit of gratitude, to be a eucharistic person.

Every individual and every family has its own list of blessings for which gratitude should be expressed. Communities and Diocesan Churches do, as well. Here are a few for us.

We, in this area of the Allegheny Mountains, have been spared weather-wise. Floods, hurricanes, earthquakes, fires, and tornadoes have afflicted other parts of our nation. They have not visited us in these past several years.

There have been no terrorist attacks in the United States since that infamous nine-eleven of 2001. Other nations have experienced them, even recently. And, while the war in Iraq is an unpopular one with many (war is not usually something that we embrace), the fact of the matter is that we do not have a draft. Those fighting for the cause are volunteers. Our sons and daughters have not been conscripted into military service.

I cannot get over how grateful we should be that United Flight 93 was brought down in an empty field and not in a populated area. It flew over Johnstown and could have come down in the middle of that city or any other community along its path. But, it did not. For that, we should express publicly our gratitude at every opportunity that we are offered, especially during special public celebrations of the Eucharist.

Another blessing to our area was the miraculous rescue of nine miners at Quecreek Mine after being trapped 77 hours underground. I remember one of them telling me during an interview that he was convinced that there were ten of them down there. He was referring to an angel of God.

It is regretful that we tend to take God’s goodness for granted. He does not owe us anything. We owe Him for everything. Perhaps, this Thanksgiving, we will have resolved to give thanks as a life-long process, even into our nineties, - should the Almighty gift us with such longevity of service to him.