



**Tom Edwards Evangelistic
Assoc., Inc.**
a ministry of lay Catholic evangelization & mission—

*Forty-seven years
of
Full time outreach*

*Don't be a Turkey
/Give thanks in all things*

The

Proclamator

Languishing in a prison cell while writing to the new church at Ephesus, the Apostle Paul speaks of himself, “I Paul a prisoner”. (Eph. 3:1) He ask others not to lose heart because of the afflictions from which he is suffering (vs. 3:13). He speaks of himself as an “ambassador in chains” (vs. 6:20). From this horrid place, he seems to shout out “—give thanks always and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father.” (vs. 5:20).

The Apostle’s “attitude of gratitude” while in the midst of difficult circumstances should be a driving force to all believers in our day. We might tend to think that we are living in unprecedented times of difficulty, but are we really?

About 150 years ago, our country was in dire straits. Abraham Lincoln was President. The country was divided and at war with itself. Thousands had been slain, wounded, mutilated. Hundreds of families experienced devastating loss. In the midst of that, Lincoln dared to establish the “last Thursday of November” a day of “thanksgiving and praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the heavens.” In his proclamation to “all citizens” he wrote—*And I recommend to them that, while offering up the ascriptions justly due to Him for such singular deliverances and blessings they do also, with humble penitence for our national perverseness and disobedience, commend to His tender care all those who have become widows, orphans, mourners, or sufferers in the lamentable civil strife in which we are unavoidably engaged, and fervently implore the interposition of the Almighty hand to heal the wounds of the nation, and to restore it, as soon as may be consistent with the Divine purposes, to the full enjoyment of peace, harmony, tranquility, and union.*

In this proclamation, Lincoln was echoing an age old principle that has its roots in God Himself. That principle calls us to look to the goodness and glory of our creator God even in the midst of our darkest hours.

Consider Job in ancient days. His situation went from bad to worse to worst. First, he loses all of his wealth: oxen, asses, sheep, camels and all shepherds and herdsmen, Then his brother and all of his sons and daughters were killed while feasting in a home that was demolished by a tornado. What more could happen? Oh, just one more thing. Job was smote with boils from head to foot (ouch!) After days of suffering, God speaks directly to Job and says, **“Listen to this Job! Stand and consider the marvels of God!”(Job 37:14) In effect, in the midst of all of his trials, God is saying—“Job, it’s time to count your blessings!”**

How far our culture has drifted away from the day of penitence and thanksgiving proclaimed by President Lincoln. Many of us, including myself, have fallen into the habit of casually referring to the day as Turkey Day. What a “birdbrain” thing to say.

I read an interesting article about turkeys. It pointed out that the commercially grown domestic turkey is pound for pound one of the least intelligent creatures on the planet. In the process of being bred to have big meaty breast, the brain gets greatly diminished.

The article went on to say, “Your average domestic turkey can get into trouble doing something as simple as eating. Turkeys have been known to starve to death right next to a mountain of food. But other times they will eat so much so quickly that grain will fill their gullets and they die by choking. Drinking water can be a problem for turkeys

also. Farmers frequently find them drowned in shallow troughs. If a turkey is outdoors looking up at the sky when it starts to rain and its mouth is open, it can die. They're often not smart enough to close their mouths in the rain and so they can drown standing up.

So, perhaps it would be a good idea not to act like a turkey and give heed to a genuine giving of thanks as exemplified by the Apostle Paul. Actually, the message of Holy Scripture exhorts us to move from **thanks-giving to thanks-living**. We are to be like living fountains constantly offering streams of thanksgiving for the blessings that continually stream forth to us.

Who can forget the powerful truth conveyed to us by the gospel of Luke 17:11-19? Jesus is traveling through Samaria and Galilee. He comes to a village where a group of ten lepers cry out from a distance. Yes, they were social distancing according to the law. Jesus only tells them "Go show yourselves to the priest". On the way they were healed. *And one of them, realizing he had been healed, returned, glorifying God in a loud voice; (16) and he fell at the feet of Jesus and thanked him. He was a Samaritan. (17) Jesus said in reply, "Ten were cleansed, were they not? Where are the other nine? (18) Has none but this foreigner returned to give thanks to God?" (19) Then he said to him, "Stand up and go; your faith has saved you."*

Jesus seems to be shocked that only one of the ten returned with a word of thanksgiving. Only one and he was a foreigner. Only one celebrated in thanksgiving. One foreigner and nine turkeys.

I used to read or hear this passage and think to myself: How could nine people be healed from the terrible disease of leprosy and not even bother to give thanks? It was on such an occasion that the Holy Spirit spoke within me and whispered, "Tom, just this day, have you given me thanks for just at least one of the many blessings I have given you" Bingo!—I was as guilty. I was acting like one of the ungrateful turkeys.

I remember one of my early mission trips to Ghana in the 1990s. On Sunday morning, I was invited to travel with one of Ghanaian friends to a remote outstation for the Sunday morning service. The celebration was for the Catholics in the village, but only rarely was a priest able to go and actually celebrate mass in one of the more than seventy outstations in the diocese. The lay Catechist of the village would conduct the service which would be like a Mass, but with pre-consecrated hosts for communion. I was to share a message. As per the norm,

it took longer that anticipated to travel there on natural roads. We arrived about two hours late. The choir had been carrying on with lots of singing and celebration. The church was a thatched roof on poles, no walls. About one hundred villagers were gathered in and out of the church. After the reading of the gospel, a man came to the front with a little book and pencil. He called out a word in the local language. Many people stood up and began to dance. They eventually danced their way up to the offering basket. The man then counted the coins and wrote something in the book. The he called out another word, and another group of people danced and did the same. Then again a third time. At this point I asked my friend what was going on. He explained that the man was calling out a day of the week. In Ghana, the day of the week you are born on becomes part of your name. We were now on "Kwaku" (Wednesday). When all the weekdays were called, the man up front called out again. This time the name of the day that resulted in the greatest amount of offerings given. Then everyone stood up and danced with fervent joy. My friend explained that the grand total given was equal to sixteen American dollars, an exceptionally large amount in this little village church. He shared that the people truly believed that giving was a great moment of thanksgiving for all the blessings that they had received and they really believed the Word of God that says "God loves a cheerful giver". In later years as I went to a number of other African countries, I was to learn that dancing with joy is very much the norm when one gives out of gratitude. Often times in our events, the people dance forward with sacks of grain, baskets of fruit and vegetables, chickens, ducks, goats, even cattle and pigs. It all goes to the support of the local church.

So, yes, we all have a share of hardship, loss, suffering, grief. At the same time, if you woke up this morning and took a breath, that was a blessing from God. The Lord has made so much provision for his people. Indeed, he came to give life, life in abundance. We won't realize the magnitude of that abundance until this temporal earthly life has given way to an eternity with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Indeed everyday, but especially the day we have set aside for Thanksgiving to God, is an opportunity to give our all in focusing on the immensity of blessings that he has showered upon us. Let's enjoy our turkey with all the trimmings. Let's give thanks in all ways and everything, **but let's be careful to not be a turkey.**

For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected when received with thanksgiving. (1 Timothy 4:4)



October, 2021 Slovakia Mission

Our Renewal Ministries outreach to Slovakia was filled with opportunities to share with a multitude of souls in six different cities and towns. Our team was asked to be the speakers for the annual OHEN (FIRE RALLY) in Presov, Slovakia. More than 15,000 across the country viewed the virtual conference.



Gathering with young adults in Poprad



Jean Marie shares with group in the capital city of Bratislava.



Wherever we went, people were hungry for personal prayer. Many stayed into the late hours of the night.



Our team, Tom & Jean Marie, Bohdan Novak, and Patricia Welther of Walker, LA with Fr. Konrád Blicharský and friends in Orava, Slovakia

The Mystery of Giving

Consider this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each must do as already determined, without sadness or compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. Moreover, God is able to make every grace abundant for you, so that in all things, always having all you need, you may have abundance for every good work. (2 Cor. 9:6-8)

This simple agrarian illustration is pregnant with lessons to learn regarding our giving plan. Consider:

1. Like a tiny seed of grain that is sown, the crop produced may be exponentially returned.
2. Our giving plan is not haphazard or without thought. It is predetermined in prayerful thought.
3. Giving is not by compulsion. It is not by arm twisting or manipulation. It flows from the “want to” of a generous spirit.
4. True giving is not grievous or begrudging. It is a joy. God loves a “cheerful giver”. Interestingly the word “cheerful” in the Greek text is “hilaros”. It’s a wondrously hilarious act of the heart and mind.
5. Thus, God is able to make every grace flow to you. Enough for your own present needs and plenty left over for all kinds of good works. WOW!



*Tom & Jean Marie
Edwards*



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*Please prayerfully consider this ministry of lay Catholic Evangelization
and mission in your special gifts this season.*

Our primary mission: to reach souls for Christ.

Tom Edwards Evangelistic Assoc., Inc., P. O. Box 2113, St. Augustine, FL 32085

Tel: (904) 471-8672 Email: goyetomedwards@att.net, www.catholic-evangelization.homestead.com

or <https://goyetomedwards.wixsite.com/parishmission>.