

Thanksgiving. 09

Did you notice that sentence in the first reading from the Book of Sirach which says: “Who (God) fosters people’s growth from their mother’s womb.” It is true, is it not? Parents can attest to this. They give birth to their children, but then these children become their own people, and their parents shake their heads and say: “Where did all that come from?” This first reading gives us the answer: God fosters their growth from their mother’s wombs, and fashions them according to his will.”

On the other hand, there are some things which clearly come from our parents, and those of us who were blessed with good parents know that they instilled in us the virtue of thankfulness. Ta, ta, they taught us to say when we were too young to form full words and someone gave us a gift. And when we began to speak they taught us to say thank-you. Indeed, if we had very good parents, they did more than simply teach us to say thank-you, they instilled in us a general attitude of thankfulness in our approach to life and other people. When we reflect on today’s Gospel, couldn’t we imagine that the man who returned to thank Jesus for his restored health was a man whose parents had taught him to say thank-you while the other nine did not have such parents. They had not been

taught to say thank-you. Their parents had not instilled in them a general attitude of thankfulness towards life and other people.

I would suspect that most of us here can say that our parents taught us to say thank-you and instilled in us an attitude of thankfulness. We thank them now for that.

Thanksgiving is a national feast. It is a reminder to us as citizens of the USA to give thanks to God for all the gifts we enjoy as citizens of this nation. But in teaching us to be thankful as citizens, the nation, like our parents, is teaching us what our faith also teaches us, for Christian faith is one grand thank-you to God for all our gifts: life here and now and the promise of life forever, freedom, intelligence, love, present now in limited forms in us but destined for completion in another life, and, most of all for the divinization of the human race which has taken place in Jesus of Nazareth, for in him God became human so that humans could become divine.

And so, on this Thanksgiving morning, as citizens of this country and as citizens of the Kingdom of God, let us thank God for His many gifts to us: for life, for health, for patience and hope in times of trial and sickness, for the fruitfulness of the earth which feeds us, for the intelligence of people which makes life easier for us, for

parents and grandparents, for brothers and sisters, godparents, aunts and uncles, for gifts of mind and soul and body, for friends.

Having been given so much, let us imitate God by using our gifts for the benefit of those who have need of them.