

THANKSGIVING LETTER 2022

In 1983, when our family moved from our French-speaking Province of Québec to Florida, we faced a few challenges; some more difficult than others. For me and our three sons, it was to learn the English language. For my husband, it was a new start, career wise. But we pulled through, and we eventually made this beautiful country, our home.

Our first Thanksgiving on U.S. soil is one that I personally remember. I was amazed to see that many Americans would sometimes travel thousands of miles to be with family members and friends to celebrate this Holiday. And what about the traditional meal? Turkey, stuffing and brown gravy with all the sides, as they say in the South, which include sweet potato, green beans and corn casseroles; and, of course, pumpkin pie for dessert. The casseroles were definitely a first for us! I would say, however, that over the years, the corn casserole has become one of my favorites!

Thanksgiving is such a wonderful holiday! It's a time when families and friends come together to celebrate a long-time tradition, friendship and love. It's a time to reflect on the many blessings we received throughout the year, and to thank our Heavenly Father for being the source of them all. It's also an opportunity to express our appreciation to our family members, friends, co-workers, and to those who make a difference in our lives. In essence, to be thankful and grateful; two words that the dictionary defines as synonymous. I believe, however, that there's a world of difference between 'thankfulness' and 'gratitude', as you'll see in the following story.

A little girl asked her father for a very special gift for Christmas. She had seen this beautiful doll advertised in a magazine, and had immediately fallen in love with it. Her father wasn't a wealthy man, and since it was a bit pricey, he told her that he'll think about it, but that she shouldn't keep her hopes up... On Christmas morning, there were three presents under the tree with her name on it. She quickly opened the first two, but there was no doll... She was obviously disappointed, but she thanked her dad for the gifts. Then, holding her breath, she unwrapped the last one and slowly opened the box... Lo and behold, laying inside was the doll she'd asked for! You can imagine her excitement! Her dad then said that her aunt was the one who bought it for her. She immediately put the doll back in the box, ran to her aunt, and put her arms around her. She hugged her as hard as she could, and thanked her over, and over again. She also hugged her dad tightly, thanked him again for his gifts, and went on playing with her new doll and toys.

A few weeks later, the little girl was helping her aunt do the laundry. When it was time to hang the clothes to dry, out of the blue, she asked her aunt, "Do you have a lot of money in your piggy bank?" Surprised by her question, her aunt hesitated for a few seconds, and then replied with a smile, "Well, no... I can't say that I have..." The little girl quickly dropped the piece of clothing she was holding in the laundry basket. Then, she ran to her bedroom, got her piggy bank, and took all the money she had saved. She didn't even count how much there was in it! All excited, holding the dollar bills and coins tightly in her tiny hands, she ran back to her aunt, and with a huge smile on her face she said, "Here...this is a gift for you!" Her aunt was truly touched by the little girl's generosity, but she said that she didn't really need it, and for her to keep it... Disappointed, tears began to run down the little girl's cheeks... Seeing her disappointment, she accepted her gift, put the money in the pocket of her apron, hugged her tightly, and thanked her for it.

Later on during the week, the little girl went to her bedroom to put a few coins in her piggy bank. She knew it was empty, but when she opened it up, to her surprise, she found a few dollar bills in it! She was thrilled, but strangely, she never asked who did it... She was just happy and thankful that it was full again!

This little girl was very thankful for her gifts, but she took it one step further, didn't she? In a general sense, when we demonstrate genuine gratitude for something or someone in our life, we respond with thankfulness, kindness, and other kinds of generosity. Gratitude is also about being appreciative for what we have, as opposed to what we want. It's to appreciate life daily, even when nothing exciting happens, or that the day is a good one even when evidence points to the opposite. This kind of gratitude, however, is not based on our feelings, but rather on a decision or a choice we make.

When I think about the war that is still going on in Ukraine, the recent flooding in Pakistan and, closer to home, hurricane Ian, I realize that I have a lot to be thankful and grateful for. These events dramatically changed the lives of so many people from one day to the next. Lives were lost, homes and possessions were destroyed, and the repercussions of it all are so devastating... No doubt these people are constantly yearning for a return to some kind of normalcy.

I am so thankful and grateful to God that all of our family came out unharmed from hurricane Ian after it made landfall. For the people who got the worst of it, and who are presently dealing with the aftermath, my heart sincerely goes out to them. I keep them in my prayers, as well as all the dedicated volunteers who are working relentlessly to help them clean up the mess left behind, and to assist them in their deepest needs.

As we celebrate Thanksgiving, let's take a moment to reflect on what we're thankful and grateful for. Why? Because in doing so, it will make us focus on all of our blessings, and realize that our life is such a good one compared to others. It will help us put aside our self-centeredness, selfishness that usually make us grumpy, discontent with our present situation. Our circumstances may not always be exhilarating and perfect. The persons around us may not always behave the way we'd like them to. Nobody is perfect, we're not, and it's not an idealistic world we live in. But we have a choice... In life there will always be those things that we can complain about, but there will also be much to be thankful for. However, as our society becomes increasingly secular, the actual "giving of thanks to God" during our annual Thanksgiving Holiday is oftentimes being overlooked, leaving only the feasting. This is a sad reality...

I pray for us all that our Heavenly Father may find us thankful and grateful every day for all of His gifts: material, physical, and spiritual; for He is good and every good gift comes from Him. May we also be found faithful in expressing our thanks and gratitude for His most precious gift of eternal life through His Son, Jesus, for anyone who believes in Him. On this day, let's also be generous both with our words and our actions as we show our genuine appreciation to our loved ones, and to the people that make a difference in our lives. And I might add, why not make it a habit all year round?😊

HAPPY AND BLESSED THANKSGIVING TO ALL!

P.S. By the way, I was that little girl in the story! Who would have thought?😊

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