



**Thanksgiving Day  
November 26, 2009  
The Rev. Randall Hehr**

I cannot sing the hymn, “*We plough the fields and scatter,*” on Thanksgiving Day without thinking of my grandfather folding his hands in prayer at the dinner table in the farmhouse in Pennsylvania. My grandfather’s prayer on that day reflected his lifetime as a farmer. He was a patient man who understood seasons and cycles of life. He knew what it meant to live with drought and hardship. I remember how often he spoke to me about life during the Great Depression and how community farmers pulled together to help one another. He had a reverence for the earth and knew that the smallest things could make a huge difference. Therefore, he gave thanks for all God’s gifts. On rare opportunities when I was there on the farm to cultivate the corn or gather in the harvest, I witnessed the way his neighbors and friends in the Oley Valley of Pennsylvania came together to help one another.

Thanks be to God that we have people in our lives who teach us to see life with eyes of thanksgiving. I recently read something about perception that was interesting. The writer said the image in our eye accounts for twenty per cent of what we see. The other eighty per cent comes from what is within us, our experience and what we know. Do you and I see life with eyes of thanksgiving?

This afternoon after a long liturgy of turkey, conversation and laughter, I will no doubt feel a tug on my hand. It will be my four-year-old niece, Isabella, saying, “Let’s go on an adventure.” I will take her hand in mine and we will take a tour of my brother’s back yard, seeking crawling and leaping creatures and all things that chirp and click in the night. Isabella eyes are a gift to me, for she will consider the lilies and the birds of the air. She will consider the frogs, beetles, and even the lizards. She will consider how God has created them and cares for them.

Thanks be to God that we have people in our lives who help us see the wonder of God's creation! We can see the incredible link between all living things and the delicate balance in our ecosystem. God has blessed us in creation and we are stewards of all God's gifts. The Old Testament lesson reminds us how God provided food for the children of Israel in their great journey through the wilderness and how God a rich, fertile promised land. In many ways we live in a "promised land."

We gather today in the Holy Eucharist to give thanks to Almighty God. Eucharist means "thanksgiving." The liturgy reminds us *it is right, a good and joyful thing always and everywhere to give thanks to God!* And if we **practice** giving thanks to God for the gifts poured upon us each day, that **practice of thankfulness** will spill out of our lives, our words, our actions to others around us.

Aldous Huxley said, "Most human beings have an almost infinite capacity for taking things for granted." The practices of thanksgiving keep us from our own propensity to take things for granted.

This week I heard the story of Susan Jacobs. I became aware of her through emails sent to me by members of our Contemporary Women's Bible Study. They are reaching out to help people who are facing tough times in this economy. The emails told the story of Susan Jacobs, who years ago had to get out of an abusive relationship and ended up trying to get to work each day without a car. Do you take it for granted every morning that your car will be there when you are ready to go to work? Have you ever tried using public transportation to get to work? Susan struggled until a stranger heard her story and gave her a car. Out of her gratitude she started **WHEELS OF SUCCESS**, a Tampa organization that helps low income families have a car so they can get to work. Since 2003, 528 families are on the road today because of Susan Jacobs and her team. They depend upon many gifts and contributions to keep their organization going.

Let us give thanks to God for all the gifts we receive. Let us engage in the **practices of thanksgiving!** Let people know when you are grateful. Grace isn't a little prayer you say before a meal. It is a way of living. Thanksgiving is not just a day, it is a way of life.