

Gratitude Foundation



*“Were not ten cleansed? Where are the other nine?
Has only this foreigner returned to give thanks to God?”*

(Lk. 17:15-17)

Feast of The Holy Family—Year A

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“In all things give thanks, it is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus”

(1 Thess: 5:18)

Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph – Year A

Reading I

Sirach 3:2-6, 12-14

God sets a father in honor over his children;
a mother's authority he confirms over her sons.
Whoever honors his father atones for sins,
and preserves himself from them.
When he prays, he is heard;
he stores up riches who reveres his mother.
Whoever honors his father is gladdened by children,
and, when he prays, is heard.
Whoever reveres his father will live a long life;
he who obeys his father brings comfort to his mother.
My son, take care of your father when he is old;
grieve him not as long as he lives.
Even if his mind fail, be considerate of him;
revile him not all the days of his life;
kindness to a father will not be forgotten,
firmly planted against the debt of your sins
—a house raised in justice to you.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 128:1-2, 3, 4-5.

R. (cf. 1) **Blessed are those who fear the Lord and walk in his ways.**
Blessed is everyone who fears the LORD,
who walks in his ways!
For you shall eat the fruit of your handiwork;
blessed shall you be, and favored.
R. **Blessed are those who fear the Lord and walk in his ways.**

Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine
in the recesses of your home;
your children like olive plants
around your table.
R. **Blessed are those who fear the Lord and walk in his ways.**

Behold, thus is the man blessed
who fears the LORD.
The LORD bless you from Zion:
may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem
all the days of your life.
R. Blessed are those who fear the Lord and walk in his ways.

Reading II

Colossians 3:12-21 or 3:12-17

Brothers and sisters:
Put on, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved,
heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience,
bearing with one another and forgiving one another,
if one has a grievance against another;
as the Lord has forgiven you, so must you also do.
And over all these put on love,
that is, the bond of perfection.
And let the peace of Christ control your hearts,
the peace into which you were also called in one body.
And be thankful.
Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly,
as in all wisdom you teach and admonish one another,
singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs
with gratitude in your hearts to God.
And whatever you do, in word or in deed,
do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus,
giving thanks to God the Father through him.
Wives, be subordinate to your husbands,
as is proper in the Lord.
Husbands, love your wives,
and avoid any bitterness toward them.
Children, obey your parents in everything,
for this is pleasing to the Lord.
Fathers, do not provoke your children,
so they may not become discouraged.

Alleluia

Colossians 3:15a, 16a

R. Alleluia, alleluia.
Let the peace of Christ control your hearts;
Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.
R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23

When the magi had departed, behold,
the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said,
“Rise, take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt,
and stay there until I tell you.
Herod is going to search for the child to destroy him.”
Joseph rose and took the child and his mother by night
and departed for Egypt.
He stayed there until the death of Herod,
that what the Lord had said through the prophet might be fulfilled,
Out of Egypt I called my son.

When Herod had died, behold,
the angel of the Lord appeared in a dream
to Joseph in Egypt and said,
“Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel,
for those who sought the child’s life are dead.”
He rose, took the child and his mother,
and went to the land of Israel.
But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea
in place of his father Herod,
he was afraid to go back there.
And because he had been warned in a dream,
he departed for the region of Galilee.
He went and dwelt in a town called Nazareth,
so that what had been spoken through the prophets
might be fulfilled,
He shall be called a Nazorean.

Exegesis

Sirach 3:2-6, 12-14

Sirach was promulgated approximately 180 years before Christ. It was written in Hebrew by a man named Ben Sira who was a Jewish person living in Jerusalem. *Sirach* gets its name from the transliteration of the name *Sira* into the Greek *Sirach*. The book was translated into Greek by Ben Sira's grandson several years later.

Ben Sira was a well-educated Jew who dedicated his life to a study of the Law and the Prophets. He was a highly respected scribe and teacher, who ran an academy for young Jewish men.¹ He was concerned with the growing Hellenistic influence on the people and in particular its negative influence on orthodox Jewish Religion. He viewed the Greek influence as a dilution of authentic fidelity to Yahweh.

Sirach is a beautiful collection of wisdom and poetry. The original title in Hebrew was *The Wisdom of Yeshua (Jesus) ben (son of) Eleazar ben Sira*.² *Sirach* begins "Praise of Wisdom. All wisdom comes from the Lord and with him it remains forever... Before all things else, wisdom was created, and prudent understanding from eternity. To whom has wisdom's root been revealed? Who knows her subtleties? There is but one, wise and truly awe-inspiring, seated upon his throne: It is the Lord; he created her... He has poured her forth upon all his works." (Sir 1: 1-8). In contrast with Greek philosophy which viewed wisdom as a human attribute flowing from within, *Sirach* reveals wisdom as a gift from God. God is the creator and the source of wisdom, and He chooses to pour out His wisdom upon creation. "With wisdom and knowledge, He fills them; good and evil He shows them." (Sir 17: 6).

Our pericope today is titled *Duties Toward Parents* in the NAB. *Sirach* references the Law as revealed in *Exodus*, *Deuteronomy*, and *Proverbs*. "Honor your father and your mother, that you may have a long life in the land which the Lord, your God, is giving you." (Ex 20: 12). "Honor your father and your mother, as the Lord, your God, has commanded you, that you may have a long life and prosperity in the land which the Lord, your God, is giving you." (Deut 5: 16). "If one curses his father or mother, his lamp will go out at the coming of darkness." (Prov 20: 20).

Sirach will reinforce this teaching in a later chapter. "With your whole heart honor your father; your mother's birth pangs forget not. Remember, of these parents you were born; what can you give them for all they gave you?" (Sir 7: 27-28).

St. Paul emphasizes this teaching in his *Letter to the Ephesians*. "Children, obey your parents (in the Lord), for this is right. 'Honor your father and your mother.' This is the first commandment with a promise, 'that it may go well with you and that you may have a long life on earth.' Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up with the training and instruction of the Lord." (Eph 6: 1-4).

1. Brown, Fitzmyer, Murphy; *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*; P.H.; Englewood Cliffs, N.J.; page 498.

2. Ibid.

Exegesis (Continued)

Psalm 128:1-2, 3, 4-5.

Psalm 128 is a short song of only 6 verses. It is titled *The Happy Home of the Just* in the NAB and *Blessed is Everyone Who Fears the Lord* in the ESV.

Blessed is everyone who fears the LORD, who walks in his ways! For you shall eat the fruit of your handiwork; blessed shall you be and favored. The Psalm begins with the Hebrew word *asre* which is translated as *blessed* in some translations and as *happy* in other translations. The word seems to follow the same deep sense of bliss or profound inner joy that is expressed by the Greek word *markarios* which is also translated as *blessed* and is pronounced *ble-said*. It too describes an inner joy of the soul that has God as its source, i.e. one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit. *Markarios* is the word used by Jesus in the *Beatitudes* to describe this state of being.

The Hebrew word that is translated as *LORD* in this verse and throughout the psalm is *Yahweh*. The Hebrew word that we translate as *fear* is *yirah*. Although *yirah* can mean craven fear, when describing man's relationship to God it most often expresses a connotation of deep reverence, awe, and respect. It describes the proper relationship between creature and his creator.

The Hebrew word that is translated as *ways* is *derek*. *Derek* originally meant a *path* or *road*, but in Sacred Scripture it evolved to signify a *way of life* or *conduct*. "So now, O children, listen to Me; instruction and wisdom do not reject! Happy the man who obeys me, and happy those who keep my ways (*derek*). (Prov 8: 32-33). Jesus would later reveal to us that He is the *Way*. He is not one way among many; He is the *Way*. (See John 14: 6).

The second part of this verse is a quotation from the Prophet Isaiah. "Happy the just, for it will be well with them, the fruits of their works they will eat." (Is 3: 10).

Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine in the recesses of your home; your children like olive plants around your table. "Your mother was like a vine planted by the water." (Ez 19:10). "But I, like an olive tree in the house of God. Trust in God's faithful love forever." (Ps 52: 9).

Behold, thus is the man blessed who fears the LORD. The LORD bless you from Zion: may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life. The Hebrew word that is translated in this verse as *blessed* is again *asre* which describes a state of being. The Hebrew word that is translated as *bless* is *barach* which means an act of passing on goodwill and favor. It stems from the Hebrew word to *kneel*. The Hebrew word that is translated as *prosperity* is *tub*. *Tub* can also be translated as *good, goodness, beauty, and wellness*.

This just and righteous relationship with God blesses one with great family relationships. The Psalm describes a loving home, with a loving husband and wife surrounded by children and grandchildren. The psalmist celebrates a deep peace that permeates the home living in just and righteous vertical and horizontal relationships.

Exegesis (Continued)

Colossians 3:12-21 or 3:12-17

Modern scholarship debates whether *Colossians* was written by Paul or one of his disciples. That discussion is beyond the scope of this exegesis, and for the sake of this writing I will use Paul as the author.

Colossae is a town in the Lycus Valley in Asia Minor. It is located a few miles east of Ephesus. It was known for its wool and textile industry. In fact, its name comes from a dark red dye used for wool, *colossinus*. Colossae was a gentile territory made up of Persians and Greeks with a sizable Jewish population of approximately 10,000.

There is no record of Paul ever visiting Colossae. The community there was founded by Epaphras, a native of Colossae. Philemon and the slave Onesimus also were natives of Colossae.

Our chosen pericope today is taken from a section that is titled in the NAB *The Ideal Christian Life in the World*. The section (Chapter 3) begins with a warning against various vices and moves to encouragement to live a life of virtue in Christ. Paul encourages the baptized to “put on a new self, which is being renewed, for knowledge, in the image of its creator. Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all and in all.” (Col 3: 10-11). In these verses Paul is defining the audience of his address, it is all inclusive, all of humanity united in Christ.

Brothers and sisters: Put on, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another, if one has a grievance against another; as the Lord has forgiven you, so must you also do. And over all these put on love, that is, the bond of perfection. The Jewish people believed that they were the chosen ones of the Lord, as God revealed this gift to them. “For you are a people sacred to the Lord, your God, He has chosen you from all the nations of the earth to be a people peculiarly His own.” (Deut 7: 6). In reality they were chosen by God to be a light to all of the nations. Paul is reminding the people that all are now chosen in Christ to be that light for all to see. That light looks like something, it must be visible in the Christian person, it is a way of living, as Christ lived and is now living in us. The Greek word that is translated as *love* in this verse is the familiar word, *agape*. *Agape* has evolved in Scripture to reveal a *love* that has God, who is *Agape*, as its source. To live in love is to live as we were intended to live. The Greek word that is translated as *bond of perfection* is *teleios*. *Teleios* is the same word that Jesus used in Matthew 5:48. “So be perfect (*teleios*) just as your Heavenly Father is perfect (*teleios*).” (Mt. 5: 48). At its root, the word *teleios* means to reach completion or maturity as its maker has created it to be. Humanity was created out of love, for love. Reaching the fullness of *agape* love is to reach perfection in Christ Jesus. Paul describes the attributes of that love in this passage.

And let the peace of Christ control your hearts, the peace into which you were also called in one body. The Greek word that is translated as *peace* in this verse is *eirene*. *Eirene* appears 92 times in the NT. *Eirene* is the closest translation of the Hebrew word *shalom*, which permeate the OT. God is the source of this inner state of being. “Peace (*Eirene*) I leave with you, My peace (*eirene*) I give you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you.” (Jn 14: 27). During this passage from the *Last Supper Discourse* Jesus is speaking of His indwelling presence. This is the *One Body* that Paul is talking about.

And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as in all wisdom you teach and admonish one another, singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. The Greek word that is translated as *thankful* in this verse and throughout *Colossians* is *eucharistos*. In the first chapter of *Colossians* Paul made clear the cause for our gratitude to God. “Let us give thanks to the Father, who has made you fit to share in the inheritance of the holy ones in light.” (Col 1: 12). The Greek word

Exegesis (Continued)

Colossians 3:12-21 or 3:12-17

that is translated as *fit* in verse twelve is *hikanoo*. *Hikanoo* means to *make sufficient or to qualify*. Paul views this *qualification* or *fitness* as coming from the grace of divine adoption. “The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ, if only we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.” (Rom 8: 16-17). “But when the fullness of time had come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to ransom those under the law, so that we might receive adoption. As proof that you are children, God sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying out, ‘Abba Father!’ So, you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God.” (Gal 4: 4-7). It is for this gift that we are thankful.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as in all wisdom you teach and admonish one another, singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. The Greek word that is translated in this verse as *word* is *logos*. *Logos* is articulated in Hellenistic thought as the Divine Mind of God. The Greek word that is translated as *wisdom* is *sophia*. *Sophia* is a word that occurs throughout the NT and the LXX translation of the OT. Throughout Sacred Scripture it is a word that is most often used to describe knowledge and understanding that comes from God, e.g., “The mouths of the just utter wisdom (*sophia*); their tongues speak what is right. God’s teaching is in their hearts; their steps do not falter.” (Ps 37: 30).

And whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. St. Paul writes in *1 Corinthians*, “Whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God.” (1 Cor 10: 31). In *Ephesians*, St. Paul writes, “Be filled with the Holy Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and playing to the Lord in your hearts, giving thanks always and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father.” (Eph 5: 18-20).

Wives, be subordinate to your husbands, as is proper in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and avoid any bitterness toward them. Children, obey your parents in everything, for this is pleasing to the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, so they may not become discouraged. This final segment of our pericope is titled *The Christian Family* in the NAB and *Rules for Christian Households* in the ESV. The Greek word that is translated as *subordinate* is *hypotasso*. *Hypotasso* means to be *submissive, subject to, subordinate, or obedient*. The word that is translated in this verse as *love* is *agapao*. *Agapao* describes a self-giving love, as in the Love of God poured upon the world from the Cross through the pierced Sacred Heart of Jesus. St. Paul is challenging families to live in *agape love* and to live in the peace (*eirene*) of Christ.

Exegesis (Continued)

Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23

Our pericope today chronicles the flight of the Holy Family into Egypt and the killing of the innocent children under King Herod. These events follow the visitation of the Magi and the presentation of their gifts. Much is revealed by the gifts themselves, especially the gift of the myrrh, which is a burial ointment. In the gift of myrrh, the Passion and death of Jesus is revealed. There are also interesting similarities with the events in the life of Moses. The exodus experience is a paradigm for salvation history and now Jesus is the fulfillment, the actualization of salvation history, for born to us is a Savior, Jesus Christ the Lord.

His mission to the nations as Savior is revealed by the wisemen, and His rejection begins even before His birth with the lack of room at the Inn and at His birth with the hostility and rejection at the hands of King Herod and his cohorts.

Exegesis (Continued)

Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23

When the magi had departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you. Herod is going to search for the child to destroy him." Joseph rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed for Egypt. He stayed there until the death of Herod, that what the Lord had said through the prophet might be fulfilled, Out of Egypt I called my son. The Greek word that is translated as *behold* in this verse and the verse that follows is *idou*. *Idou* can also be translated as *lo, look, see, listen, or pay attention*. This exhortation precedes the appearance of angels throughout the OT and the Gospels. God wants attention given to His messenger. The Hebrew equivalent to the Greek *idou* is *hinneh*. "Behold (*hinneh*), I send My messenger, and he will prepare the way for Me." (Mal 3: 1).

The Greek word that is translated as *destroy* in this verse is *apollymi*. *Apollymi* appears again in the Passion narrative. "The chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas but to destroy (*apollymi*) Jesus." (Mt 27: 20). There is also an obvious parallel with Pharaoh seeking to destroy the child Moses, and the killing of the Hebrew babies as they were born. "Pharaoh then commanded all his subjects, 'Throw into the river every boy that is born to the Hebrews, but you may let all the girls live.'" (Ex 1: 22). Later, as an adult, Moses would flee to the land of Midian until the death of Pharaoh who was seeking to kill him. After the death of Pharaoh Moses would return to Egypt. "In Midian the Lord said to Moses, 'Go back to Egypt, for all the men who sought your life are dead.'" (Ex 4: 19).

Egypt came under Roman control in 30 B.C., but it was not under Herod's jurisdiction. Herod died in March or April in the year 4 B.C. Scholars suggest that Jesus was born in the year 7 or 6 B.C. The quotation referenced at the end of this verse is from the Prophet Hosea. "When Israel was a child I loved him, out of Egypt I called My Son." (Hos 11: 1). God refers to the people of Israel as His son. "So, you (Moses) shall say to Pharaoh: Thus says the Lord: Israel is My son, My first-born. Hence, I tell you: Let My son go, that he may serve Me. If you refuse to let him go, I warn you, I will kill your son, your first-born." (Ex 4: 22-23).

When Herod had died, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child's life are dead." He rose, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go back there. And because he had been warned in a dream, he departed for the region of Galilee. After the death of Herod in 4 B.C., his territory was divided between his three remaining sons (the ones he did not put to death), Archelaus, Herod Antipas, and Philip. Archelaus had control of Judea, Samaria, and Idumea. Archelaus was notorious for his cruelty and his rule quickly turned into political chaos until the Romans stepped in in the year 6 A.D. and began appointing their own governors, the most well-known of them was Pontius Pilate. Galilee was under the rule of Herod Antipas, which was relatively peaceful in comparison to Judea. Luke indicated that Joseph and Mary were from Nazareth. (See Lk 1: 26). So Joseph and Mary were able to return safely with the child Jesus to their home in Nazareth.

He went and dwelt in a town called Nazareth, so that what had been spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, "He shall be called a Nazorean." There is no known passage in the OT as this quotation is suggesting. Nazareth was a small agricultural village near the Via Maris, the main trade route to Egypt. The etymology of the name *Nazareth* is telling, however. It is comprised of two Hebrew words, *nazir* which means *one devoted to God*, and from *neser* which means *branch* which is used with reference to the Messiah. "There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch (*neser*) from its roots shall bear fruit." (Is 11: 1).

Reflection

On the first Sunday after Christmas, we always celebrate the Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. A few years ago, I was preaching at school Mass and we were celebrating the Feast of the Holy Family. I asked the children why Jesus, Mary and Joseph are called the Holy Family. A little girl looked at me as if I had just asked the dumbest question ever, so I called on her. As she gave me “the look” she said, “Because Jesus is a part of the family and He is the Son of God.” My response was, “Good answer.” The Holy Family is holy because Jesus is a part of the family. Every family is called to be a holy family. If Jesus is a part of the family, the family will be holy. Jesus must be the bond of love that holds the family together in good times and in bad.

God chose the family structure to enter into the world. By being born into a human family Jesus sanctifies the human family forever. Jesus was not only the Son of God but also the son of Mary and foster son of Joseph. Like any child he was totally dependent on his mother and father for survival.

St. John Paul, II called the human family, the sanctuary of life. Joseph and Mary held the child Jesus in their arms. Mary nursed him. Warned in a dream they packed up and fled into Egypt for a period of time for the child’s safety. They returned to Nazareth and “The child grew and become strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon Him.” Mary and Joseph taught Him to walk, to read and write. As good Jewish parents they would have taught Him sacred scripture as well. Jesus grew up working in His father’s carpentry shop. He learned by working with and watching His father.

My own father was a very gifted carpenter. He built our home, several garages and storage buildings. As a child I worked with him often. For me it was always fun to learn new things and to build things with my hands. Over the years I too have been involved in numerous building projects, including remodeling old houses, building garages and camps, etc. I have done everything involved from concrete and block, to framing, to wiring and plumbing, to drywall and finishing work. I have never had any formal training or taken a trade class. All of my building knowledge came from working side by side with my father.

My faith came to me in the same way. It came by watching and learning from my parents and grandparents. I learned more about God and about living a life of faith from them than I did in all my years of formal faith formation, including five years of intensive seminary training. The formal training helped me to articulate the faith that I already had, faith that was passed on to me from my family.

During the ritual of the Sacrament of Baptism parents and godparents are reminded that they are the first of teachers of their children in the ways of faith and they are challenged to be the best of teachers. The best of teachers teach first by example. Never underestimate the value of the example that you set by living a devout Catholic life. There are children and grandchildren watching and learning. They learn from our example that we set; both good and bad.

My prayer is that this coming year will be a blessed and fruitful time for our parish family. Jesus is an integral part of our parish family and so we are a Holy Family. Come Holy Spirit fill the hearts of us Your faithful and enkindle in us the fire of Your love. Amen.

In the heart of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph,



Personal Witness

I think that all too often we equate holiness with perfection. This is very natural because we equate holiness with God and therefore holiness with perfection as God is perfect. Jesus once said, "You, therefore, be perfect as your heavenly father is perfect." (Matt. 5:48) Naturally, like many people, I always struggled with that command. How can we with all our human failings be perfect as God is perfect? The word that we translate as perfect is *teleios* in Greek and *tam* or *shalem* in Hebrew. The etymology of the word means finished or completed. In scripture it means to fulfill, or complete, or accomplish the purpose for which God created something to be. God is love. We were created in God's image and likeness. We were created out of love and for love. Love is therefore our purpose, love true and steadfast, love enduring and giving.

Within God is this perfect family of love between the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit is that bond of love that makes God one. By its very nature love cannot be contained in God because it is self-giving. God's love therefore burst out into all of creation. We are the product of that love. The persons of God define themselves in that relationship, Father to Son and Son to Father. At the Last Supper Jesus prayed, "Father, may they be one as You and I are One."

The family is God's plan for us. It is part of His perfect plan from the beginning of time. He made them male and female. He destined male and female to become one, as in one flesh. He told them to burst forth that love and multiply the earth.

I am blessed and eternally grateful to have been born into a loving family. It was not a perfect family as the world defines perfection, but it was a holy family, in that Jesus was a part of our family. The family that I speak of transcends father, mother, and siblings; it includes grandparents, extended family, church family and even neighbors. The multicultural expression "It takes a whole village to raise a child" certainly applied to my childhood experience. It was almost impossible to get away with anything! Multiple caring eyes seemed everywhere.

We were not rich in worldly goods. Both sets of grandparents came from very modest backgrounds. But in the words of my grandmother who was raised with 8 siblings on a very small dairy farm, "we were poor back then but didn't know it." They lived through challenging times. They endured the great depression and sent their sons to fight in the Second World War. They struggled at times to provide the very basics of life for their children. But they were rich in love and family, in faith and community.

They were rich in gratitude. They truly were thankful to God and each other in all circumstances. They were always thankful for the most basic blessings of life. Thanksgiving was more than an annual holiday; it was a way of life. They practiced gratitude.

My paternal grandparents owned a small country grocery and general merchandise store. On a typical Saturday morning I would "help" my grandfather delivering groceries around the countryside. We traveled down remote sideroads to extremely shabby shacks and trailer homes. Most often those abodes were bursting with children. I learned much later in life that my grandfather seldom invoiced for those groceries. He was always helping someone.

A neighbor who was recently married was building a new home and it was just framed in. On Thanksgiving Day, he fell from the roof and ended up in the hospital for weeks. He returned home on Christmas Eve to find his home complete. My father, grandfather, uncles, and neighbors finished his home for him and his new wife. They were practicing gratitude!

In that environment I cannot recall ever feeling a sense of entitlement. Back then it was an entirely foreign concept to me. For that I am most grateful!

Fr Glenn