

I can remember being in grammar school,
and talking about the “first thanksgiving.”
We heard all about the pilgrims that came over on the mayflower,
with their awesome big hats with belt buckles on them,
as well as the golf pant knickers they wore.
I also recall that, according to my teacher, anyway,
the native Americans welcomed the pilgrims with open arms.
There was a tremendous feast had between the natives and the alien pilgrims.
At this first feast,
I am sure there were 20lb. butterballs,
Green bean casserole,
Family members yelling at each other,
and the Detroit Lions surely lost the football game,
back in the 17th century.
All joking aside,
the first Thanksgiving meal was to celebrate the successful year’s harvest,
There probably wasn’t a turkey, cranberry sauce or Aunt Judy’s stuffing.
What there was,
well,
there was gratitude,
and sense of acknowledgement of where every gift came from:
Almighty God.
I am pretty certain that first Thanksgiving was not the way we like to imagine it.
In fact,
I would argue,
that was not the very first thanksgiving meal.
The true First Thanksgiving meal,
can be found in the Holy Scriptures.
What am I talking about?
The Holy Communion.
Also known as the mass, or the Eucharist,
This was a thanksgiving meal.
In fact,
In the original Greek,
Eucharist means thanksgiving, or gratitude.
Each week the church recalls that first thanksgiving,
By celebrating the great thanksgiving,
the Holy Mass.
On the night before Christ was betrayed,
He sat at the dinner table with his closet friends,
and those people He called His family.
They gave thanks, broke bread, and ate together.
And just like our family dinners today,
it was a rag-tag bunch.
I am sure there was the drunk uncle none of us like to talk about,
and there was the grandma who didn’t know when to be quiet.

I also know that surrounding Christ,
were individuals who were a bit shady.
One of them would even betray him the next day.
Thanksgiving for us today,
can mean any number of things.
It can be a time to get together with our family,
whether we like all of them or not!
Doesn't matter.
When we come to the altar rail,
the true thanksgiving table,
we do so with our church family,
people whom we love to hang out with,
and others we might have a difficult time liking.
But we are called to love them all.
Jesus doesn't care who we like or don't like.
He welcomes all those that are members of his Holy Family through baptism to come and feast
on the bread and wine,
The only meal that will never leave us wanting more.
Instead of turkey,
we consume the body of Christ.
We don't drink champagne or sparkling grape juice,
but rather we drink the blood of our savior.
And we don't need a nap or have to loosen our pants after receiving communion!
Instead,
we are required to go out of these church doors,
and be bearers of God's love and hope to a hurting world.
As a kid,
my family made the trek from Syracuse to Binghamton every Thanksgiving.
How many of us have ever had to go somewhere for Thanksgiving?
I remember the ride in the backseat with my older, meaner sister.
Oh, she loved to instigate!
And of course,
I was always the one getting into trouble.
And then there was the ride home.
It was late at night,
my sister and I were stuffed to the gills with potatoes and pumpkin pie.
We would be sound asleep the minute we left my uncle's driveway until my dad beeped the horn
when we got home.
Part of the Thanksgiving experience is the travel, isn't it?
It is no different in the Holy Eucharist.
A 20th century Anglican monk put it this way:
"We so often think about receiving our Lord in Holy Communion.
Of course that is one way of looking at it: that we receive him.
But, we don't bring his greatness to our littleness.
We can't pull his strength down to our weakness.
And we don't drag down his holiness to our sinfulness.

No,
it's the other way about.
We are taken up by him.
We are lifted up.
Lifted from out of our littleness,
up to his greatness,
Our sinfulness is swallowed up by his holiness,
And our weakness is poured out,
into his strength.
It isn't we who receive him,
but He who receives us."
Think about that: he receives us!
When we come to receive communion,
God is taking us from the earthly realm,
and bringing us up to the heavenly realm.
God doesn't hop in his Buick and come to our house for the Lord's supper!
Instead,
He sends down his heavenly humvee limo,
with full leather interior,
flat screen tv,
and complimentary wet bar,
to carry us up to his mansion.
A place where we dine like royalty,
Even though we wouldn't even deserve to eat at God's greasy spoon.
We acknowledge that when we declare in the prayer of humble access,
"Lord we are not worthy to gather up the crumbs from under your table."
(pause, since you're shifting subjects a bit)
Every year on that last Thursday of November,
we celebrate Thanksgiving with tremendous fanfare and ritual.
As I got older,
That ritual began when I met up with old friends on Thanksgiving eve.
We had all returned home from our various locations.
The next morning I would get up with a cup of coffee and watch sponge-bob, daffy duck and
woody-woodpecker in the Macy's parade,
which always culminated with the arrival of Santa.
The turkey would go in the oven,
And we would eat dill dip with pumernickel bread,
to tide us over till supper.
Then, the grand meal,
Which seems to go by so fast after hours of preparation! How do mashed potatoes get cold so
fast!?
Next,
was desert,
and football.
And the night ended with a totally unnecessary turkey sandwich.
The entire day was set apart.

We know each of our given families rituals when it comes to thanksgiving.

Today is Consecration Sunday, a new ritual for St. Paul's.

The word consecration in the New Testament,
means "set-apart" or made "holy."

Now, we know that every day, each moment in time, is consecrated by and for the Lord.
Today is no different.

However,

it is a day we have set apart to give back to God from that which he has provided for us.

Our gifts, our talents, and everything we have,
including money,
comes from God.

Jen will be singing one of my favorite songs at the offertory.

I would encourage you to listen closely to the words.

The song reminds us,
that everything we have comes from God,
especially each breath we take.

When we give of our time, treasure and talents,
we do so out of thanksgiving for who God is,
and all He has done.

Today,

when we fill out our pledge cards,

let us do it with joy,

gratefullness,

hope and thanksgiving.

Supper's ready.

Amen.