

St. Demetrius Orthodox Church

November 2015

Thanksgiving, the Result of One Woman's Persistence

"Thanksgiving Day: A national holiday in the United States commemorating the harvest of the Plymouth Colony in 1621, following a winter of great hardship" is the official description of holiday.

Did you know that it was not always so? When it was first inaugurated, Thanksgiving was a rather insignificant event with only a few eastern states participating. Did you know that the change was made mainly through the determined crusade of one woman? Sarah Hale, was determined to have the whole nation united in setting aside a national day for giving thanks to Him from whom all blessings flow.

With this as her goal, she wrote many articles and letters to the various newspapers and journals of her time. In addition, she pleaded long and hard with Presidents Fillmore, Pierce, and Buchanan from 1846 through 1856. Her first measure of triumph occurred in 1852 when the campaign succeeded in uniting 29 states in marking the last Thursday of November as Thanksgiving Day.

Then came the Civil War. Who would listen to a lone woman with her persistent plea for "just one day of peace amidst the blood and strife"? One man did. In 1863 President Abraham Lincoln officially proclaimed the last Thursday of November as the day set apart for the national giving of thanks unto Almighty God.

As we sit at our bountiful tables with family and friends, let us remember to give thanks to God for our many blessings, and remember that by the tireless efforts of one person, the observance of Thanksgiving Day became a reality.

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Spiritual Examination The Trumpet Call!

The following was written by an Orthodox lay person who dedicated it to the memory of Fr. Nicholas Elias, an Orthodox Priest. No doubt, it is a serious spiritual examination of this lay man's life, but with which many, to some degree—more or less, can identify.

Which commandment is the first of all? Jesus was asked to mediate amongst disputing scribes. His answer was loud and clear. The Lord our God, the Lord is one, and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself—there is no other commandment greater than these. And the scribe said to him "You are right teacher; You have truly said that He is the one and there is no other but He; and to love him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." And when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, He said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." Mark chapter 12:30-34. I was under the erroneous impression that since I go to church regularly, light my candle and throw a few dollars in the plate, I'm a God loving person. The truth is that I have used all my heart for the desires of this world, all my mind and my understanding to establish my earthly career goals, and all my strength for sports and temporary activities.

Therefore I am very far from God and His Kingdom, and the more I search my inner-self, the more I examine my spiritual condition, I begin to realize that I don't really love God. I do not have religious faith and I'm full of pride and materialism. These facts I discovered about myself after a careful inner examination. The diagnosis shows that I don't love God! If I truly loved God I would be in constant dialogue with Him—in the morning in the car, at work, out of work, in school, on vacation, in the air and the sea....He is everywhere. Every thought about God would give me joy and gladness. Furthermore, I would be especially happy in His home. But why is it that I find myself getting there late while during the week I'm always on time for my other business matters? Why does my mind wander and my spirit is everywhere but where it is suppose to be? And while I can sit for many hours through a sports event, a basketball final, football field, fishing derby or in front of my computer, I have to force myself through a Sunday morning service.

When two people have genuine love for each other and they announce their love through engagement, they cannot wait to get off work so they can be in each others company. It is no longer natural for them to live separately, so with the blessed sacrament of marriage they unite and are always with each other. In a similar manner, if I truly loved God I would want to be constantly talking to Him at every hour and every place. Unfortunately, while I can easily stay on the telephone for hours with any one of my friends or family members, I have to force myself to pray to God. In the morning I can easily spend 45 minutes on coffee and the newspaper, yet I try to hurry through my morning prayers.

I remember a few years ago when I used to watch television that I would sit for three and four hours watching a football game, a movie, or anything else, and my eyes would be glued to the set. Why is it that I cannot spend a small fraction of that time to thank my Creator who allows me to wake up every morning and keep breathing through the day? Day after day I strive to learn and experience new things, I spend hours on my work, my studies, my career. All through the years I labored—mostly in vain—to meet people and to get to know them as much as possible, even though I will only be with them for ten, twenty, fifty years, but I have made very little effort to get to really and truly know the one person that died for me, the person that promises to make me an eternal price, the person I'm supposed to spend eternity with, the person of Jesus Christ. Even now while I spend 15-20 hours a day for earthly things I can hardly spend more than an hour or two working my salvation and eternal life.

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