



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF SAN FRANCISCO

ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΑΓΙΟΥ ΦΡΑΓΚΙΣΚΟΥ

ENCYCLICAL FOR THANKSGIVING 2017

Dearly Beloved,

*“We thank you, Christ our God, for you have satisfied us with earthly gifts.
Do not deprive us of your heavenly kingdom, but as you, O Savior,
came among your disciples and gave them peace, come among us also and save us.”*

This prayer of thanksgiving is offered at the close of a meal in the Orthodox Tradition. Placing a word of thanks at the end of a meal, whether an elaborate feast such as that we will have on Thanksgiving Day or a simple supper with family or friends that we have most other days reminds us that all we have on this earth is a gift of the Most High God.

We have been blessed with many earthly gifts for which we should offer thanks to God, not just on one day of the year, but every day. Thanksgiving Day is a distinctively American holiday, and, without being overly nationalistic about it, one that sets us apart from other nations. Setting aside a day to give thanks entered our national consciousness from the very beginning. In 1777, the fledgling American nation proclaimed a day of thanksgiving so “that with one heart and one voice the good people may express the grateful feelings of their hearts, and consecrate themselves to the service of their divine benefactor.” As Orthodox Christians we will offer our words of thanks to the Triune God. But all Americans will offer a moment of thanks, no matter what religion they profess.

The second phrase of the prayer, “*Do not deprive us of your heavenly kingdom,*” invites us to reflect on the purpose of these gifts: our entry into God’s kingdom. Isn’t this wonderful? Our loving and gracious God has given us the means to enter into a relationship with Himself and become citizens of His eternal and heavenly Kingdom. As the Psalmist says, “When you give to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are filled with good things.” The Lord’s

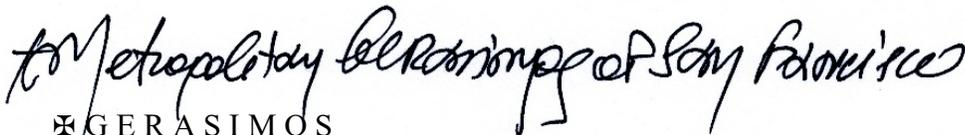
hand is continually open, providing us with all that we need, and for this reason, we offer our continual thanks.

Because the Lord has been so gracious and generous to us, our response should be to be gracious and generous to those around us. This generosity can overflow into our parishes and communities. This is the work of the good steward, creating and sharing abundance, so that the Kingdom of God can be within the reach of all. We are those stewards, the instruments of God's kingdom, *"distributing to all, as any have need"* (cf Acts of the Apostles 2:45).

How will we share our abundance this Thanksgiving holiday? Our Thanksgiving tables will be overladen so that our families and friends can celebrate the feast. Extending an invitation and opening our homes to those without a place to go is a first step. All of our parishes have members who live alone or far from family that we can invite. Offering even a few hours of the day to work among the poor or the homeless can make a difference. There are food banks and shelters that need our help, not just on Thanksgiving but year round. Charitable giving to support the many ministries of our Church and community that serve those in need provides them with the financial resources they need. All are acts of thanksgiving in response to what God has already done for us.

May our Lord grant to you and your loved ones a Blessed, Peaceful and joyous Thanksgiving holiday.

With Love in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Metropolitan Gerasimos of San Francisco". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

✠ GERASIMOS
Metropolitan of San Francisco