

Giving Thanks to God Always For Everything and Everyone!

Since we celebrated All Saints Day two weeks ago, we have begun to enter into the joyful and hectic two-month period preceding Christmas. This week, our entire country celebrates Thanksgiving Day. More and more people are taking the entire Thanksgiving week off (no longer 2 or 3 days) so that they can spend enough time traveling and meeting their relatives and friends. Shortly after Thanksgiving, we enter into the four weeks of **Advent** (First Sunday of Advent on December 2nd) ending with our (now) traditional novena of nine Masses before Christmas (beginning December 15). In this joyful period of anticipation of the coming of baby Jesus, we have many opportunities to **thank God** for all the **blessings** He provides us every day of our lives. Traditionally, most of us give special thanks to God on **Thanksgiving Day** (November 22, 2018).

This year, I want to take this opportunity to reiterate to all of you my heartfelt appreciation for all your **prayers** and **get-well notes** as I was recovering from open heart surgery. I will never forget the day Fr. Santiago came to see me and brought hundreds of your notes, letters, including drawings, and best wishes from nearly every one of the children enrolled in our religious program (over 300). I recall that after dinner on that very day, I opened all of them. You cannot imagine the **joy** that I felt in my heart. It may have taken me close to two hours to read all of them. I was not in a hurry. I could hear your voices and see your smiles. I could feel your genuine love. My eyes were filled with tears of joy. It was then an easy decision to display all the cards around my room. It became a constant reminder that I was not alone. It helped me to be more patient and to accept that it may take me many weeks before returning to the parish. In the end, I had to wait nearly two and a half months! One of my best friends from Northern Maryland, Deacon Chester, told me that "God was happy that I had to go through this major surgery, as it led so many people to **pray** together."

Since I returned to the parish (already six months ago!), many of you have kept praying for my full recovery. God has been good. **He** has given me the strength to continue to serve you. As some of you have noticed, I am still getting tired from time to time. This is **God's** gentle way of reminding me that I still need to pace myself and slow down. I have now fully completed all the recommended weeks of cardiac rehabilitation, but still need to keep exercising and watching my diet. My greatest joy has been to be with you in both good times and bad times, while being able to help those in most need.

St. Paul has taught us that we should give thanks to God always for everything (Ephesians 5:20) and everyone (1 Thessalonians 1:2). Everything we have comes from **God**! Any gift we receive from anyone is therefore from God.

I would like to **thank God** for the great support I have received from our entire clergy (priest and deacons) and for all our staff. I am always amazed by the large number of volunteers (over 300) who make our parish vibrant with so many activities. I will not list all our volunteer groups as there are so many that I am afraid will forget to mention some of them. But I would like to **thank God** for providing us with so many talented and dedicated **volunteers**! They are truly the backbone of our parish. Pope Francis has described the parish as the **family of families**. OLHOC is truly a family of families where God gives us so many opportunities to participate in the building of **His Kingdom**. **God's home is our OLHOC home! Let us all thank God for that gift!**

I wish you all a most **Blessed Thanksgiving Day** with your own family and friends! I invite you also to **come and pray with us**: at 7 pm Mass on the day before Thanksgiving (with blessing of the food) or 9 am Mass on Thanksgiving Day. After thanking God at Mass, get ready for the joy of a great meal at home! Enjoy the turkeys and pumpkin pies around the same table! Show love around you! Keep smiling!

As we continue celebrating the **Year of the Holy Spirit**, may I suggest that you pray to the Holy Spirit with your family:

"Come, Holy Spirit! Fill our hearts with the fire of your love!

Come Holy Spirit, guide us, help us to show love to one another!

Come Holy Spirit! Help us to have a most joyful Thanksgiving Day, giving thanks to God for everything we have!"

One in Christ,
Fr. Alain