**Thanksgiving**

Later on this week, we will celebrate one of the few civil holidays that whole world can completely get behind…because a heart of Thanksgiving should be at the center of all of our lives.

One Saint had a dream how the angel takes him to heaven to see what is going on Heaven. The angel and the saint went in the long corridor then got into big and noisy room, a lot of angels were working with papers and envelopes, the letters just coming and coming more and more. The angel said: “ here we receive prayers request that people send to God in order to get what they ask”. Then they closed the door and went into another room, this room was as busy as the previous one, papers, letters, boxes, angels everything was flying around. The angel said: “here we pack what people were asking from God and send to them”. They left this room and went into third one, surprisingly, there was only one angel who looked very bored, few papers on the table, he was sitting and sighing. Here the angel said we receive peoples thanks for the gifts they just received from God!

When we wake up in the morning, we have to give thanks for the ability to once again get out of bed and serve the Lord.  When we enter into our conversations with the almighty, we make an effort to spend time, not only asking Him for certain things that we want, but for giving thanks for all that He has given us:  Life…Love…Family…Friends…Warmth…Church…the ability to pray…we should be giving thanks for all of these things, **and so much more**, not just on the last Thursday of November, but every single day.

One of the biggest reasons we gather together in the Church, especially during the Divine Liturgy, is thanksgiving.  We spend entire worship services giving thanks to the Holy Trinity!

**Thank you** Lord for Your Only Begotten Son.

**Thank you** for freedom from sin, the devil, and death.

**Thank you** for deliverance from suffering.

 We know from experience in the spiritual life what happens when we do not give thanks to God in our lives, and it is why our worship services always take on a tenor of thanksgiving.  To not say “thank you”…is to say in our minds and our hearts:  “I deserve this”.  It is to fill ourselves up with ourselves, and when we do that, we become like the “inn” in Bethlehem…there is no place for the Christ Child to lay his head.  To live a mature Christian life, is to be in a constant state of giving thanks for all that our Lord has given us.

In early December of 1983, there was a very well-known priest that I know many of you have read…and perhaps some had the chance to meet, called Fr. Alexander Schmemann.  He wrote many books, gave many lectures, and spent a majority of his time writing about that theme of Thanksgiving which is so central to all of our lives.

During his last Divine Liturgy with us here in the material world, which happened to be on Thanksgiving Day, he did something that he had never done before.  Normally, Fr. Alexander delivered his homilies “off the cuff”, but that day he took a short written sermon from his pocked, and in the form of a prayer, he began to read it to the faithful.

As we prepare for the Holiday this coming week, let us take a moment to listen to that wonderful homily, which serves as a truly wonderful reminder for all of us, that no matter what is going on in our personal lives, there is so much to be thankful for.

*Everyone capable of thanksgiving is capable of salvation and eternal joy.*

*Thank You, O Lord, for having accepted this Eucharist, which we offered to the Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and which filled our hearts with the joy, peace and righteousness of the Holy Spirit.*

*Thank You, O Lord, for having revealed Yourself unto us and given us the foretaste of Your Kingdom.*

*Thank You, O Lord, for having united us to one another in serving You and Your Holy Church.*

*Thank You, O Lord, for having helped us to overcome all difficulties, tensions, passions, temptations and restored peace, mutual love and joy in sharing the communion of the Holy Spirit.*

*Thank You, O Lord, for the sufferings You bestowed upon us, for they are purifying us from selfishness and reminding us of the “one thing needed;” Your eternal Kingdom.*

*Thank You, O Lord, for having given us this country where we are free to worship You.*

*Thank You, O Lord, for this school, where the name of God is proclaimed.*

*Thank You, O Lord, for our families: husbands, wives and, especially, children who teach us how to celebrate Your holy Name in joy, movement and holy noise.*

*Thank You, O Lord, for everyone and everything.*

*Great are You, O Lord, and marvelous are Your deeds, and no word is sufficient to celebrate Your miracles.  Lord, it is good to be here! Amen!*