

CHURCH STUFF

(A newsletter for Catholic cadets)

Week of 24 November, 2002

To my Catholic brothers and sisters in the Corps:

A thought for Thanksgiving:

Glorious God!
How curious that we should set aside
only one day a year
and call it "Thanksgiving".

Holy Friend!
I offer you praise and thanks
for EVERY day,
for ALL times and places in my life.

I breathe, and it is Your breath that fills me.
I look, and it is Your light by which I see.
I move, and it is Your energy moving in me.
I listen, and even the stones speak of You.
I touch, and You are between finger and skin.
I think, and the thoughts are sparks of Your truth.
I love, and the throb is Your presence.
I laugh, and it is the rustle of Your passing.
I weep, and it is Your Spirit brooding over me.
I long, and it is the tug of Your Kingdom.

For my life,
for those who walk with me,
for words and music and worship,
for the world,
and for the One who promised me a Kingdom,
I pause this day to say my thanks.
Amen!

Have a wonderful Thanksgiving Break!!

THINGS CATHOLICS CAN DO:

THANKSGIVING MASS
The annual THANKSGIVING MASS will be held

next Tuesday, 26 November, at 1930 at the Catholic Chapel. And you're invited to stay afterward to sample the pies that members of the Parish are providing.

IF YOU'RE PLANNING ON HAVING
CHILDREN SOMEDAY...

you might be interested in classes on NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING. The classes will begin on Sunday, 24 November, following the 1100 Mass. For info, please contact LTC Strunck in the Law Dept.

TO REMEMBER YOUR BELOVED DEAD

Just stop in at the Washington Hall office, and add their names to the Book of Remembrance...or e-mail me the names, and I'll add them. They're remembered each day of November at the 0630 Mass.

ARE YOU TRAVELING FOR BREAK?

Perhaps you might make this prayer a part of your journey. It's part of "The Itinerarium" (an ancient ceremony held in monasteries before anyone went on a journey - the Latin word "iter" means "a journey"):

Heavenly Father,
whose glory fills creation,
preserve all who travel.
Surround us with Your loving care
and bring us back safely to the journey's end.
May Your holy angel accompany us.
Be a help to us when we go forward,
a comfort by the way,
a shadow from the heat,
a covering from rain and cold,
a refuge in trouble.
We stand in awe at Your bounty, Father.
You are God without end.
Amen!

DID YOU KNOW?

THANKSGIVING:

Our celebration of THANKSGIVING is "made in the USA", and it isn't contained in the Catholic Church's world-wide calendar, simply because not every country celebrates it as we do in the USA.

We all know the story: the English Pilgrims (who had spent 12 years in Holland to escape persecution for their religious beliefs) arrived in Patuxet (later called Plymouth) in Massachusetts on 11 November, 1620. In their first year, a bitter winter and a poor diet took the lives of 47 out of the 100 Mayflower passengers.

In the Fall of 1621, even though the harvest was meager, the Pilgrims decided to have a Thanksgiving holiday. The local native-American chief - Massasoit, chief of the Wampanoags - attended, along with 90 of his warriors.

The day was spent in competition in games and marksmanship, and the banquet consisted of venison, duck, goose, seafood, eels, white and corn bread, leeks, watercress, greens, desserts made from wild plums and berries, and wine. Turkey does not seem to have been on the original menu.

The charter of the Pilgrims called for a "day of thanksgiving" on the anniversary of their arrival, and over the following years, they sporadically observed the practice (for example, two years later, they observed a "Thanksgiving Day" on 20 July, 1623, to thank God for much-needed rain).

After that, the custom spread slowly to other colonies, and the day was observed at whatever part of the Fall saw the harvest of crops.

In 1789, George Washington decreed a "day of national thanksgiving" (26 November of that year), but the practice was again sporadic until Abraham Lincoln ordered that the final Thursday of each November be observed as a day of praise and thanks to a gracious Heavenly Father.

Finally, in 1941, Congress passed legislation that the fourth Thursday of each November be observed as Thanksgiving Day and a national holiday.

But all of this has roots - as you may suspect - in the Jewish and Christian traditions of Western Civilizations, as well as the practices of Native Americans.

The Aztecs of Mexico celebrated the corn harvest by beheading a young girl who represented Xilonen, the goddess of new corn...and it seemed that the Pawnees also sacrificed a young girl. More calmly, the Cherokees danced the Green Corn Dance and began the new year at the end of the harvest.

Jewish religious traditions had both public and private thanksgiving sacrifices, some of which are detailed in the Hebrew Scriptures. The fifty days before Pentecost (in the Spring) were a seven-week Thanksgiving festival called "Shavuot" (Feast of Weeks), and there was a harvest Thanksgiving feast in the Fall called "Sukkot" (Feast of Booths).

And the "thanksgiving" theme was very prominent in early Christianity as well. The word chosen to describe the bread-and-cup memorial-ritual of Jesus' Resurrection and his continuing presence was "eucharist" (from the Greek word for "thanksgiving").

While Roman Catholic tradition has never developed a separate universal "thanksgiving day" (in addition to the daily "Eucharist"), most countries of Europe had some kind of thanksgiving celebration, and it was often kept in the Fall during harvest time. For example, the Feast of Mary's Assumption was kept in Hungary as a "thanksgiving day", and England, Germany, France and Holland kept 11 November (St. Martin's Day) as a kind of "thanksgiving" festival.

In the USA, the day is kept primarily as a family celebration, which usually contains some special type of "table grace". Many churches have a special "thanksgiving" service which is ecumenical in nature, demonstrating that the whole theme of "thanksgiving" is a natural part of the human spirit, arising from the deep instincts of the heart.

PLEASE REMEMBER IN YOUR PRAYERS

- ...Mrs. Butts (wife of CSM Butts), who is recovering from a stroke. Please remember her and the whole Butts family.
- ...LTC Endres' (DCA) mother-in-law, who died this week. Please remember her and the family.
- ...several members of the Corps have lost family members recently. Please think think of them in prayer.
- ...anyone from the Corps who's traveling to Memphis (or anywhere, for that matter) this weekend.
- ...all our military brothers and sisters - and their families - throughout the world, especially those in areas of risk.
- ...and since this is November, please remember in prayer all the names of the dead inscribed in the Books of Remembrance, both in our office and at the Chapel.

GOT A QUESTION?

Q: Father, I noticed that the Cadet Bible is missing some books - ie, Wisdom, Tobit, I and II Machabees. Why is that?

A: The Cadet Bible uses the Protestant version of the Old Testament, which is a bit shorter than the Catholic version. At the time of the Reformation, the Protestant reformers eliminated 7 books (and parts of others): Tobit, Judith, Wisdom, Sirach, I and II Macchabees, Baruch, and parts of Esther and Daniel.

Thus, the Catholic version of the Old Testament has 46 books in it, while the Protestant version has 39.

The reason for this is that there were two very early versions of the Old Testament used by the early Jews at or around the time of Christ: one was called the "Hebrew Bible" and was used primarily by the Jews living in Judaea and Galilee; the other was called "The Septuagint" - it was a Greek version of the Hebrew Bible with some additions (the books I mentioned above) and was used by Jews living in Greek-speaking parts of the world and also by the early Christians.

Neither of these was the "official" Jewish Bible; each was used in whatever part of the world a particular Jewish community happened to be located.

The early Christian Church seemed to favor the Greek form. 80% of the references in the New Testament refer back to the Greek form of the Old Testament (The Septuagint), rather than to the Hebrew Bible. Still, there was disagreement in the Church for about 1500 years as to which version should be used.

At the time of the Reformation, Martin Luther and other Protestant scholars were

very eager to return to the practice of the early Church, and so, they adopted the Hebrew Bible as their version of the Old Testament, believing that it had been used by the early Christians. The Catholic tradition stuck with the Greek version. Modern scholarship - both Catholic and Protestant - seems to be leaning toward the opinion that the early Christians did, in fact, use the Greek version rather than the Hebrew.

But the old division still remains, and the Protestant translations either leave out the 7 disputed books of the Old Testament, or they group them together in a separate section called "The Apocrypha" (this isn't the same as the Book of Revelation, which is sometimes called "The Apocalypse"). These 7 books are also sometimes called "The Deuterocanonical Books".

And the Cadet Bible, as I said, follows the old division and omits the 7 books you were asking about, following the older Protestant preference about the Old Testament books.

THEOLOGY EVERY CATHOLIC SHOULD KNOW:

(Note: we continue our treatment of the
Ten Commandments)

NINTH COMMANDMENT: "You shall not covet your
neighbor's wife."

Exodus 20:17

Deuteronomy 5:21

In his first Letter (2:16) in the New Testament, St. John distinguishes three types of covetousness (unbridled desire). Here's what he says:

For all that is in the world -
sensual lust, enticement for the eyes and a pretentious life -
is not from the Father but from the world.

Catholic tradition has always interpreted the Ninth Commandment as forbidding the first of these: sensual lust.

The idea of "covet" has always implied "an unbridled desire that is contrary to human reason", and as such, it is a violation of God's law. St. Paul identifies this type of desire as the rebellion of the "flesh" against the "Spirit".

This type of desire (moralists call it "concupiscence") unsettles the human MORAL FACULTY and inclines us weak human beings to commit sin.

With this interpretation, the Ninth Commandment is seen as dealing with issues of PURITY...and this means not only purity of BODY but also purity of HEART.

These are connected.

First, PURITY OF HEART:

Remembering Jesus' words "Blessed are the PURE of HEART...(Matthew 5:8), Catholic tradition has always maintained that PURITY starts with the human HEART. A human needs to attune his or her INTELLECT and WILL to the demands of God's holiness. Having done this, a human will then "see" as God sees and will permit that PURITY of HEART to overflow into his or her

PHYSICAL attitudes...which brings us to the next level: PURITY of BODY.

PURITY OF BODY:

The Ninth Commandment enjoins us to develop an attitude by which we see the human body as a TEMPLE of the Holy Spirit and a manifestation of divine beauty. Given the fact that human desire is "disordered", this is a continual struggle for every human being. Each person is constantly exposed to the temptation to use the human body (of oneself and of others) in ways for which it was not meant. So the serious moral person must

- practice the virtue of CHASTITY (which allows us to love with an upright and undivided heart);
- develop a PURITY of intention (which desires to do God's will in every situation);
- develop a PURITY of vision, both external and internal (by which one develops a discipline of feelings and imagination);
- develop a habit of PRAYER (because none of this can be done by one's own powers).

PURITY also requires a sense of MODESTY, which protects the intimate center of each person. MODESTY also guides how one looks at others and behaves toward them. MODESTY is decency. It inspires one's choice of clothing and knows how to be reserved in the face of voyeuristic explorations of the human body. MODESTY awakens in human beings a deep RESPECT for the human person.

Christian PURITY also requires a purification of the SOCIAL CLIMATE, which translates as "freedom from widespread eroticism" and the avoidance of entertainment which relies heavily on voyeurism and illusion.

So our understanding of the Ninth Commandment is rooted in a conviction that the Gospel of Jesus should RENEW both the life and culture of all human beings. It never stops trying to purify and elevate the morality of people in every age and to bring them to Christ as fortified, completed and restored creatures.

UNSOLICITED SPIRITUAL THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK:

"When you instruct people,
instruct them so that they will be brought
to an understanding of the truth...
Rely on arguments which make people know
how what is said is true.
Otherwise, if you decide a question
simply by using sheer authorities,
the hearer will acquire no knowledge or understanding
and will go away empty."

St. Thomas Aquinas

d. 1274

And that's the way it is, a day like all days, filled with those events that alter and illuminate our time...

and YOU ARE THERE!!

Hope your busy lives
allow you a moment or two
to say "thanks" to God for all the blessings you have.
I hope, too, that your Thanksgiving Break will be great!!
Woodie