

Message From Bishop Bower

24 November 2026

Thanksgiving greetings to my sisters in service to our Lord, Jesus Christ!

Thanksgiving holds a special place in our American Book of Common Prayer, with its own collects and Scripture readings.

At St. George's Cathedral in Columbus, Georgia, we celebrate with a Thanksgiving Mass followed by a potluck meal in the parish hall. This gathering is especially meaningful for those unable to spend the holiday with family, including older parishioners, single parishioners, and those far from home, such as soldiers stationed at Fort Benning.

Did you know that the Pilgrims did NOT have the first Thanksgiving?



Thanksgiving's American story began before Plymouth. On April 29, 1607, the Anglican priest Robert Hunt led prayers of thanksgiving at Cape Henry, Virginia, where settlers erected a wooden cross. On December 4, 1619, settlers at Berkeley Hundred, Virginia, gave thanks for their safe arrival, with instructions to keep the anniversary holy each year. In 1621, the Pilgrims and Wampanoag shared a three-day harvest celebration at Plymouth—the gathering most familiar today.

For Anglican Catholics, these early observances recall our Anglican heritage and a lasting Christian duty: to thank God for His blessings, share generously with others, and offer our highest thanksgiving in the Holy Eucharist.

For many Americans, Thanksgiving centres on an abundant meal and an afternoon of football. Food and football are good things to enjoy, but the day invites us to something deeper than eating too much and watching a game. When we gather for the Holy Mass, we offer thanks to God for His blessings and, above all, for the gift of His Son. When we then share a meal as Christ's family, making room for those who might otherwise be alone, our gratitude becomes hospitality, and our celebration becomes an expression of Christian love.

The Collect for Thanksgiving Day — 1928 Book of Common Prayer

O MOST merciful Father, who hast blessed the labours of the husbandman in the returns of the fruits of the earth; We give thee humble and hearty thanks for this thy bounty; beseeching thee to continue thy loving-kindness to us, that our land may still yield her increase, to thy glory and our comfort; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

A Collect for the priest, Robert Hunt

O ALMIGHTY God, who didst sustain thy servant Robert Hunt amid the perils of the sea and the hardships of a distant land, that he might minister thy Word and Sacraments and proclaim the Gospel of thy Son: Grant us, after his example, courage in adversity, charity towards all men, and steadfast devotion to thy service; that, beneath the banner of the Cross, we may bear faithful witness to thy saving love, and bring others to the knowledge of thy truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. Amen.

I pray that you and your family have a blessed Thanksgiving as we journey together to Advent!

God Bless You,
Bishop Bower

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