



Anglican Orthodox Communion Worldwide
Office of the Presiding Bishop

PO Box 128
Statesville, N.C. 28687

Phone (704) 873-8365

email: usa@anglicanorthodoxchurch.org

website: www.aocinternational.org

24 November 2016, Anno Domini

Thanksgiving Day 2016

I do recommend and assign Thursday ... next to be devoted by the People of these States to the service of that great and glorious Being, who is the beneficent Author of all the good that was, that is, or that will be.

George Washington
1789

*Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, And fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan. And Jesus answering said, **Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger.** (Luke 17:14-18)*

How short our memories regarding blessings and yet enduring are those of misfortune (usually resulting from our own shortcomings). As a nation and people who have enjoyed an abundance of blessings from God for two hundred and forty years, we may have begun to take those blessings for granted. If we do, we do so at our own detriment for God does not lightly esteem the blessings He bestows. We offend the Sovereignty of God when we become ungrateful for both personal and national blessings. So why does a nation forget, or lightly esteem, the blessings of God upon them and the nation? Perhaps we have ceased to regard the sanctity of life itself. We have become a nation who, through international organs which we control, have become the foremost purveyors of abortion, pornography, and immoral living.

Our low regard for the sanctity of life and even common courtesy may arise from a lowered view of Christian principles of living and, in the end, God Himself. The Great Commandment has two parts that are really interdependent in nature. ***Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment.*** (Matt 22:37-38). At first blush it seems easy enough to love God. There is so little outward evidence upon which to weigh that love; however, the second part of this Commandment does, indeed, provide a means of outward measure for the love of our fellow neighbor. ***And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.*** (Matt 22:39-40) Are we wise and good stewards of the resources which God has placed at our disposal? Do we turn a blind eye to the suffering of others for whom we have the means of being Good Samaritans? Loving a neighbor as ourselves is not really a greater commandment than the first, just more outwardly obvious in its application, or lack thereof.

One point is certain: if we do not love God, we cannot love our neighbor truly, or even KNOW true love. Conversely, if we fail to love our neighbor, this, in itself, is evidence that we do not really love God. Our Lord abbreviated the Great Commandment in these Words: *This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.* (John 15:12) And what gage did Jesus provide us to measure that degree of love? *Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.* (John 15:13)

The great shame of modern America, and her churches, is that we have forgotten to love and honor God first. Were we to do so, our love and common respect for one another would be established anew. Common courtesy, polite manners, decency in dress, and commendable conversation are outgrowths of that love of God and our fellow citizens. Civil conduct is based on the inner compass of the heart.

America may have a short space in which to appease the offended Sovereign. May we begin to accomplish that feat through prayer, love, thanksgiving, and charity this Thanksgiving Day and throughout the years ahead.

May your Thanksgiving this year be joyful, prayerful, and faithful to the God of all Mercies,

In Christ Alone,

Jerry L. Ogles
Presiding Bishop