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## **Gratitude: A Lifestyle**

**By Mario J. Paredes**

Our present historical, social and cultural situation is one of transition from modernity to post-modernity. Such a context is opposed to any attitude of thankfulness and gratitude, or even a special THANKSGIVING DAY.

Post-modern man lives immersed in a consumer society in which what is desired is obtained through money which comes to us through human work and effort... Thanksgiving is relegated and replaced by materialism and consumer pragmatism which makes it difficult to recognize what is free instead, post-modern man buys, acquires, negotiates...

In such a chain nothing is free and there is no reason to be thankful in commercial competition where what I obtain and possess I owe to my money and commercial and professional accomplishments. Here the only thing that counts is the free exchange of supply and demand, production and consumption, in which human beings are seen as objects and “possessing” takes priority over “being” as the highest ideal to be achieved.

THANKSGIVING, the possibility of being thankful, grateful, comes from another horizon of the understanding of life: it is born out of the recognition that, thanks to God, everything that we are and have, we have freely received, to share freely with others.

Faced with the certainty of what is ours without cost, humans are grateful, they give thanks, they live with the joyful certainty that they are loved freely, with a love that only requires us to love: to give freely what we have freely received (Mt 10,8). In this way, the person who is thankful commits himself to the construction of occasions and opportunities that make possible the expression of freedom and gratitude.

In addition, this certainty of having, receiving and enjoying life as a “gift” makes possible a happy existence, “a joy that no one can take away” (Jn 16,22).



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From this perspective, THANKSGIVING DAY is a beautiful national tradition of incalculable worth, that encourages us to gather to express our gratitude, but even beyond the date and social formalities it leads us to ask what kind of individual, family and social life we are building. That is to say, we ask ourselves:

- Do we perceive that our personal, family and social life is a gift?
- Does our marketing and the consumer society in which we live allow us to transcend such to discover God's loving presence in all that we are and have?
- Is gratitude a permanent possibility in the life of those around us, or is it rather a privilege of a few: of those who have, as opposed to the poor in our society and in the world?
- Finally, let's ask ourselves about the deeper reasons that we have to maintain the tradition and to celebrate THANKSGIVING DAY.

As Christians, we live the lifestyle of children. We understand life as a gift from God and therefore we live trusting him, in joyful hope...

THANKSGIVING DAY, more than a religious festival, is a national tradition, and requires of all of us who inhabit this North American society, the construction of a more just and fraternal nation, to be more committed to each other and more equitable, for not only one day a year but every day. Mindful that we can and should always be thankful, and we all have clear and sufficient motives to be optimistic, for hope, and for joy without end.