



From the desk of the CEO
Mario J. Paredes

November 22, 2017

RECEIVE, GIVE THANKS, GIVE...

Thanksgiving is a holiday that is celebrated around the world, in places as diverse as Canada, the Caribbean, and Liberia. As a national holiday in the United States, it is celebrated annually on the fourth Thursday of November.

The historical origins of this holiday involve "giving thanks" to the Divine for a bountiful harvest and the blessings of the year that is ending. The holiday's origins also include English traditions dating back to the Protestant Reformation that emerged as a reaction to the large number of religious holidays in the Catholic calendar.

In the United States, the Thanksgiving tradition dates back to 1621, to Plymouth in today's state of Massachusetts, where members of the Wampanoag tribe helped 102 pilgrim colonists by giving them seeds and teaching them how to fish. Over time, this celebration has become one of our most anticipated and joyous holidays.

Historical evidence suggests that, in other present-day American places like Texas, Virginia, and Florida, similar ceremonies of "thanksgiving" were celebrated, some by Spanish explorers, even before that first Thanksgiving in Plymouth in 1621.

The common thread, of course, is gratitude – the emotion that is aroused when we recognize and appreciate in everything that is, in everything we have, and in everything that surrounds us, the goodness of life. Gratitude is the recognition and appreciation of all that is given by and received from a loving and transcendent presence that we call God, or from those who are dearest and closest to us, or from so many who anonymously contribute to the greater good.

For this reason, we can say that gratitude is an essential, original, and spontaneous emotion, corresponding to the grace and benevolence of God and of life; it is gratitude that encourages and gives us strength to continue living, trusting, loving, and sharing.

Gratitude is an emotion inherent in human nature that produces in us the joy of living, waiting, and sharing "without cost, what we have received without cost" (Mt 10:7-15).



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THANKSGIVING DAY is, therefore, a deeply human celebration that gives us the opportunity – together with those most beloved to us – to acknowledge how much we have to be thankful for and how much we can give on a personal, family, social, and national level.

The historical achievements of this Nation, earned through the labor and perseverance of its inhabitants, have made the United States the most prosperous country on earth. Today, we enjoy a very good quality of life compared to many other countries. This opportunity for prosperity has made the United States a safe haven, a beacon of light or land of promise to which so many men and women came and continue to arrive in search of a better life and who, with their cultural wealth and labor, enhance the present and future of this Nation.

The greatness of this Nation depends on, and will always depend on, our common purpose to care for and give thanks for the inheritance that we received from those who preceded us on this soil; while we must work to create the legacy we will leave to future generations, hoping that those who are born here and those who come here will continue to find reasons to give thanks, to love, to share, and to wait... Our greatness today compels us to care for our values, nature, institutions, and the current social infrastructure so that future generations may also experience gratitude.

Recognizing that we have so much to give thanks for, we are compelled - at the same time - to give, to share, to serve, to be supportive so that those most in need in our society and in the world have the opportunity to give thanks. Thus, gratitude becomes a permanent celebration and, above all, an everyday, common, and national attitude.

HAPPY THANKSGIVING!