

Thanksgiving Day

November 24, 2011

Deuteronomy 8:7-18

Psalm 65

2 Corinthians 9:6-15

Luke 17:11-19

In the name of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

I don't really like turkey very much. I mean it's just fine one day a year, specifically today, and in pre-sliced quantities of white meat; otherwise, not. I must explain.

Perhaps you know that I grew up as an Army dependent. We lived quite a few places during my father's career, and at one time, when I was in high school, we actually lived at Fort Sheridan, an army post on Lake Michigan about twenty miles north of Chicago. That is significant because both my parents' families then lived in Chicago, all of them.

So, family togetherness seemed to call for shared holidays, which leads me to one particular Thanksgiving long ago. It began at noon at the home of my mother's family. That would be the home of my cousin, Bill, the one who set fire to my grandfather's lawn in Wisconsin one Fourth of July; I'm sure I've mentioned him. It was just a small gathering, all sitting around one dining room table, and we had the traditional turkey and stuffing, mashed potatoes, corn, peas, and pumpkin pie.

Then, around three or three-thirty we traveled to the home of my father's parents, not so far away, at which there was that large gathering of Norwegians that I may have mentioned. My cousin, Jan, the noisy one who played drum solos uninvited, was present. I may have mentioned that my grandfather, my father's father, always sang the Doxology as grace before meals, even in restaurants. I am sure he sang it that particular day, although I was relegated to the children's table in the parlor, supervised by my Great-Aunt Nancy. We had the traditional turkey and stuffing, mashed potatoes, corn, peas, and pumpkin pie.

After the meal, as the old Norwegians were dozing in a state of turkey-torpor in easy chairs in the living room, the ladies sharing quality time in the kitchen, Cousin Jan said, "Let's take a walk." It seemed like a good idea at the time. At this point it was dark, and snow had begun to fall. We trudged through the snow, and I realized that this was not just a walk; Jan had a destination in mind. It was, of course, the home of his girlfriend, to which he had obviously been invited for, of course, Thanksgiving dinner.

They were very nice to me, although I'm sure they wondered who I was and why I was there. They very graciously made a place for me at the dining room table, and we ate – join me – the traditional turkey and stuffing, mashed potatoes, corn, peas, and pumpkin pie.

Thank you for sharing all that, Father Ingeman, and do you perhaps have a point?

Yes, and it is this: Thanksgiving isn't just about food on the table; Thanksgiving is about memories. My real memory is of time shared with family and friends. My memory is of conversation and laughter and love for one another. Thanksgiving is here, now, sharing all these things with our parish family whom I care for very much.

In His Holy Name.