

Thanksgiving Service, 2023

Opening Rite

The mystic Meister Eckhart famously wrote that if the only prayer you ever say is “Thank you,” it is enough. During this Thanksgiving season, all of us have much to give thanks for even as sadness or illness and world events revolve around us. And so, let us pray together this Tuesday before Thanksgiving. The response is, “We give thanks this day.”

For the expanding grandeur of creation, worlds known and unknown, galaxies beyond galaxies, filling us with awe and challenging our imaginations: R.

For this fragile planet earth, its times and tides, its sunsets and seasons: R.

For the joy of human life, its wonders and surprises, its hopes and achievements :R.

For our human community, our common past and future hope, our oneness transcending all separation, our capacity to work for peace and justice in the midst of hostility and oppression: R.

For high hopes and noble causes, for faith without fanaticism, for understanding of views not shared: R.

For all who have labored and suffered for a fairer world, who have lived so that others might live in dignity and freedom: R.

For human liberty and sacred rites; for opportunities to change and grow, to affirm and choose: R.

We pray that we may live not by our fears but by our hopes, not by our words but by our deeds. R. *O. Eugene Pickett*

Let us pray.

This day, we make our Sacrament of Thanksgiving, giving thanks for simple things:

Fresh air to breathe,

Cool water to drink,

The taste of food,

The protection of houses and clothes,

The comforts of home.

For all these we make an act of Thanksgiving this day!

We bring to mind all the warmth of humankind that we have known:

Our mother’s arms,

The strength of our father,

The playmates of our childhood,

The wonderful stories brought to us from the lives

Of many who talked of days gone by when fairies
And giants and all kinds of magic held sway;
The tears we have shed, the tears we have seen;
The excitement of laughter and the twinkle in the Eye
with its reminder that life is good.
For all these we make an act of Thanksgiving this day...

All these and more than mind can think, and heart can feel,
we make as our sacrament of Thanksgiving to you, our loving God, in humbleness of mind and
simplicity of heart.

(Howard Thurman, adapted by EMD)

First Reading

A reading from John Ciardi

What lifts the heron leaning on the air
I praise without a name. A crouch, a flare,
A long stroke through the cumulus of trees,
A shaped thought at the sky-then gone. O rare!
Saint Francis, being happiest on his knees
Would have cried Father! Cry anything you please.
But praise. By any name or none. But praise
The white original burst that lights
The heron on his two soft kissing kites.
When saints praise heaven lit by doves and rays'
I sit by pond scums till the air recites
Its heron back. And doubt all else. But praise!
Wisdom according to our God. *Thanks be to God.*

Psalm

Make a joyful noise to God, all the earth!

We give thanks for this good earth, your gift to us and our home,
and we pray for wisdom and gentleness to care for your creation, O God.

Worship the God with gladness; come into the divine presence with singing.

We gather with grateful hearts, remembering your mercy and strength,
your justice and your compassion, your goodness and your grace.

Know that our God is good.

May we live what we know of you and strive for what you seek, O God.

We are God's people, and the sheep of God's pasture.

In humility we pray for the entire human family,
remembering those in need, and all who are alone, dishonored or excluded.

Enter God's gates with thanksgiving and God's courts with praise.

Move us through thanksgiving and praise to action.
Use us to heal wherever there is violence and harm.

Give thanks to God, bless God's name.

May we embrace your just purpose, O God, and offer ourselves in prophetic witness.

For our God is good;

We pray for your goodness to flow outward, flooding this world with love.

God's steadfast love endures forever,

We pray for your loving purpose in every life this day and into the days to come.

And God's faithfulness to all generations.

[Bishop Hope Morgan Ward](#) is the resident bishop of North Carolina Annual Conference. You are encouraged to use this litany for personal devotion or in public worship.

Second Reading

A reading from the eighth Ode of Solomon

Open, open your hearts to the dancing joy of God, and let your love abound from heart to lips. Stand and be restored, all of you who were once flattened. Speak, you who were silent. From now on, be lifted up, you who were destroyed.

For the right hand of God is with you, and She will be a helper for you. Peace was prepared for you.

Hear the word of truth and receive the knowledge of the Most High. Your flesh may not understand what I say to you. Love me with gentleness, those who love. For I do not turn my face away from my own, because I recognize them. Even from before, when they did not yet exist, I knew them. And I imprinted a seal on their faces. I fashioned their members, and I presented my own breasts for them, so they could be refreshed, that through it, they might live.

I am delighted by my creations and am not confused by them. For they are part of Me, the force of My thoughts. I willed and formed both mind and heart, and they are My own and I love them.

The Word of God. *Thanks be to God.*

Homily

Homily Response

Prayers of the People

Closing Prayer

We give-away our thanks to the earth which gives us our home. We give-away our thanks to the rivers and lakes which give-away their water. We give-away our thanks to the trees which give-away fruit and nuts. We give-away our thanks to the wind which brings rain to water the plants. We give-away our thanks to the sun who gives-away warmth and light. All beings on earth: the trees, the animals, the wind, and the rivers give-away to one another so all is in balance. We give-away our promise to begin to learn how to stay in balance with all the earth. *Amen.* (Dolores La Chapelle)

May our loving God bless us and keep us safe.

Amen.