

America's Thanksgiving Traditions



INTERVIEW OF SAMOSET WITH THE PILGRIMS.

Dedicated to the Glory of God!

Ad Maiorem Dei Gloriam!

America's Thanksgiving Traditions

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Sources used include:

<https://capuchins.org/2016/11/24/franciscan-influence-on-first-thanksgiving/>

<https://taylormarshall.com/2011/11/thanksgivings-squanto-was-catholic-and.html>

<https://missionandshrine.org/our-story/>

<https://www.nps.gov/casa/learn/historyculture/the-first-thanksgiving.htm>

<https://texasalmanac.com/topics/history/timeline/first-thanksgiving>

<http://www.abrahamlincolnonline.org/lincoln/speeches/thanks.htm>

and several articles from <https://en.wikipedia.org> and <https://catholicsaints.info>

Scripture quotes taken from the Douay Rheims version of the Holy Bible.

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America's Thanksgiving Traditions

*Our help is in the name of the Lord,
who made heaven and earth.*

Psalm 123:8



The Catholic Church in Spain and Portugal in the sixteenth century largely escaped the turmoil of the Protestant revolt which raged through other parts of Europe, namely England, France and Germany. Early reforms that helped to restore holiness amongst the clergy and people alike opened up an opportunity for the Church to begin missionary work in the newly “discovered” lands which would become known as the Americas.

One such expedition with a missionary component paved the way for the tradition of Thanksgiving. It was that of General Pedro Menendez de Aviles to what is now northern Florida in 1565.

General Menendez was a contemporary of Spanish saints Teresa of Avila (Avila of the St Teresa fame is not to be confused with the coastal town of Aviles from where the general hailed) and Ignatius of Loyola. He was also born in the same year as Roman saint Philip Neri. It is unknown, however, if he ever met any of the three.

Menendez was not the first to bring Christianity to the Americas: 73 years had passed since the *Nina*, *Pinta*, and *Santa Maria* of Christopher Columbus had landed in San Salvador, proving to a skeptical Europe that the world was indeed round, or at least that there were lands unknown to



them. Upon those ships and others, in the rush of exploration that followed, were Catholic Franciscan missionary priests who would establish the Catholic Church in the Americas.

The Franciscans' missionary work in present day Mexico City had received the apparitions of the Blessed Virgin at Guadalupe to converted native Juan Diego in 1531 which had converted an estimated nine million natives to Christianity and brought an end to the brutality of Aztec human sacrifice.

When General Menendez led his five ships across the Atlantic to a destination nearly 2,000 miles away in 1565, his first purpose was to stop the French Huguenots—a Protestant group—from encroaching upon land already claimed for Spain. They also sought the evangelization of the Native American Indians.

The chaplain for the expedition was Padre Francisco Lopez de Mendoza Grajales. They named their destination St Augustine, as it was on his feast day they made landfall, and their missionary work was dedicated in the “Nombre de Dios” (the “Name of God”) in thanksgiving for the swift victory over the Huguenots.

On September 8, the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a solemn procession and veneration of the Holy Cross was



followed by a grand meal, both attended by local Native American Indian group the Seloy, of the Timucua tribe. The Chaplain wrote in his diary:

On Saturday the eighth the General landed with many banners spread, to the sounds of trumpets and the salutes of artillery. As I had gone ashore the evening before, I took a cross and went to meet him, singing the hymn "Te Deum Laudamus." The General, followed by all who accompanied him, marched up to the cross, knelt and kissed it. A large number of Indians watched these proceedings and imitated all that they saw done.

Whether these attending natives knew anything of



Christianity yet is unknown Perhaps through trade or war, they had heard of the Guadalupe apparition. Nonetheless, the missionary work of Menendez's expedition had begun.

After the solemn Mass of Thanksgiving to God was said, a celebratory meal which the Seloy joined followed. The menu for this momentous occasion included: cocido, a stew made from salted pork and garbanzo beans with garlic seasoning, and accompanied by hard sea biscuits and red wine. If the Seloy contributed to the meal as well, then the menu could have included turkey, venison, gopher tortoise, mullet, drum, sea catfish, maize (corn), beans, and squash.

This marks the first Thanksgiving in America.



In 1620, an event more widely known occurred 1,200 miles northeast at Plymouth Rock, Massachusetts, which also has roots in the Catholic Church.

That story actually begins several years earlier with the famed John Smith who met Tisquantum, better known as Squanto, of the Patuxet tribe. To establish trade, he taught Squanto and some other natives English and enjoyed a friendly relationship. However, some of Smith's colleagues saw an opportunity for shameful gain. In 1614, Squanto and several other natives were captured and brought to Spain to be sold into slavery.

Their plan was foiled, however, by some Franciscan brothers who saw the natives on the auction block and bought their freedom. Squanto then spent five years in England, hoping to return to his native land and tribe. During this time, he was baptized by the Franciscans and received into the Catholic Church.

Tragedy awaited him when he returned to his native land in 1619: most of his tribe had died, most likely due to European diseases. But, Squanto did not allow this to dampen the goodness of his heart.

The following year, he welcomed the Protestant Calvinists



from England who were known as Pilgrims to American soil, teaching them how to plant and harvest and survive the harsh winter for which they were wholly unprepared.

That autumn, Squanto and the few remaining natives of his tribe joined the Pilgrims at a feast of Thanksgiving — keeping with established practice in England at that time. This three-day feast was more of a secular harvest celebration with the addition of an opening prayer of thanks, not a primarily religious celebration.

Squanto lived another two years before dying suddenly of a fever. His charity of heart toward neighbors in distress has won him a place in the tradition of Thanksgiving in America.



George Washington



Abraham Lincoln

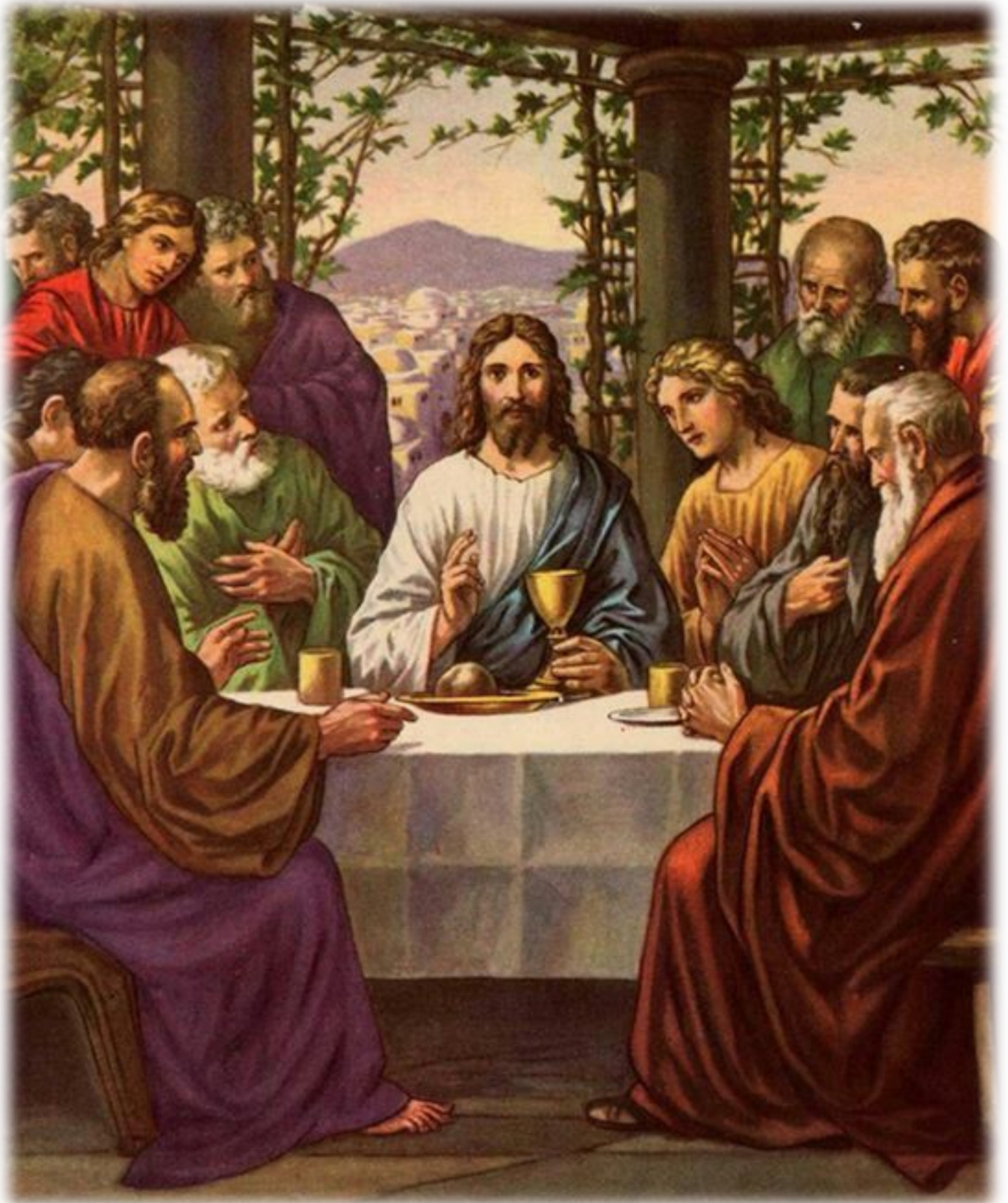
Other early settlers to America also celebrated joyous Thanksgivings, contributing to the longstanding custom of the Thanksgiving meal.

In El Paso, Texas in 1598 under the leadership of Spanish explorer Juan de Oñate, a Mass and meal of Thanksgiving were offered after his expedition was saved from starvation.

Upon the victory of the newly formed United States of America over the British crown in the late 18th century, the newly elected first president of the United States, George Washington, at the urging of Congress, declared November 26 as a commemoration of Thanksgiving.

Then, in 1863, with the country torn by Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln declared a day of thanksgiving to God on the last Thursday of November to help restore unity and godliness to a broken country. He made this a National Holiday. The President asked all Americans:

with one heart and one voice to implore the interposition of the Almighty to heal the wounds of the nation and to restore it...to full enjoyment of peace, harmony, tranquility and union.



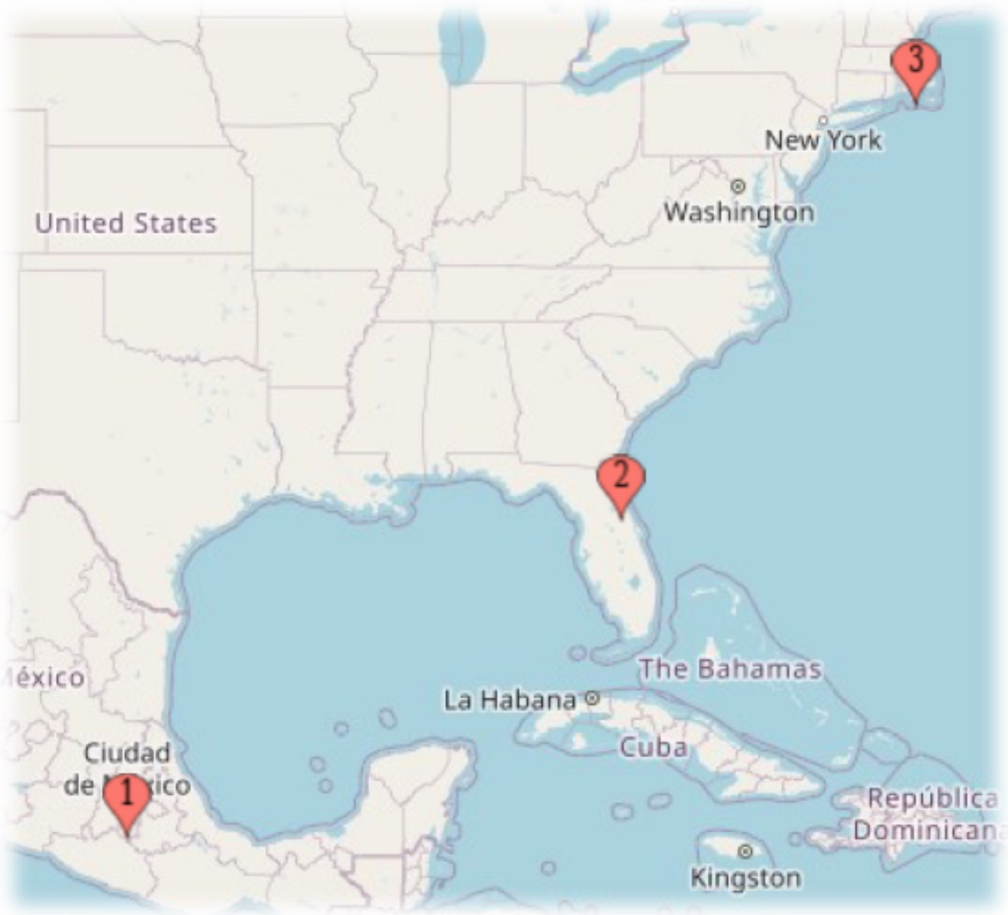
It is quite appropriate that our American forefathers chose to use *Thursday*: for the first Eucharistic Sacrifice was celebrated by Christ and his disciples on Holy Thursday, the night before His crucifixion.

St Paul describes the Eucharistic Meal to the new Christians of the community he founded in Corinth as a commemoration of thanksgiving to God:

And giving thanks, broke, and said: Take ye, and eat: this is my body, which shall be delivered for you: this do for the commemoration of me. (1 Corinthians 11:24)

When the Mass is said, we offer our humble and meager thanks to Almighty God for the gift of His redemption on the Cross and that gift is re-presented upon the altar in the hands of the priest.

As we celebrate Thanksgiving together, let us remember not only for *what* we are thankful, but to *whom* we owe that thanks: Our Almighty God, creator of heaven and earth!



Map Legend

1. Site of Our Lady of Guadalupe apparitions, near present-day Mexico City, Mexico
2. Mission Nombre de Dios, St Augustine, Florida
3. Plymouth Rock, Massachusetts

Suggestions for Thanksgiving Day

1. Prepare your heart, not just your dinner table: spend part of Thanksgiving morning in thanksgiving to God.
2. Attend Mass as a family before the feasting begins.
3. After all guests have arrived, pray together earnestly, using the following pages as suggestions.
4. Invite guests to write their gratitude to God on a collage to be displayed prominently during the feast.
5. Give thanks to God for all things, the sorrows and sufferings that make us like Him on the Cross as well as the graces that bring us joy.
6. Take turns during your meal sharing stories of events of the past year that each is especially grateful for.
7. For party favors, use a prayer card or booklet featuring Catholic prayers of thanks.
8. Say the Rosary together, asking the Blessed Mother to offer your thanksgiving to God.
9. Purchase food for the poor and deliver to local agencies prior to Thanksgiving day, and also throughout the year.

Psalms of Thanksgiving

Psalm 95

Sing ye to the Lord and bless his name: shew forth his salvation from day to day. Declare his glory among the Gentiles: his wonders among all people. For the Lord is great, and exceedingly to be praised: he is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the Gentiles are devils: but the Lord made the heavens

Praise and beauty are before him: holiness and majesty in his sanctuary. Bring ye to the Lord, O ye kindreds of the Gentiles, bring ye to the Lord glory and honour: Bring to the Lord glory unto his name. Bring up sacrifices, and come into his courts: Adore ye the Lord in his holy court. Let all the earth be moved at his presence. Say ye among the Gentiles, the Lord hath reigned. For he hath corrected the world, which shall not be moved: he will judge the people with justice.

Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad, let the sea be moved, and the fulness thereof: The fields and all things that are in them shall be joyful. Then shall all the trees of the woods rejoice Before the face of the Lord, because he cometh: because he cometh to judge the earth. He shall judge the world with justice, and the people with his truth.

Psalm 137

I will praise thee, O Lord, with my whole heart: for thou hast heard the words of my mouth. I will sing praise to thee in the sight of his angels: I will worship towards thy holy temple, and I will give glory to thy name. For thy mercy, and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy holy name above all. In what day soever I shall call upon thee, hear me: thou shalt multiply strength in my soul. May all the kings of the earth give glory to thee: for they have heard all the words of thy mouth. And let them sing in the ways of the Lord: for great is the glory of the Lord.

For the Lord is high, and looketh on the low: and the high he knoweth afar off. If I shall walk in the midst of tribulation, thou wilt quicken me: and thou hast stretched forth thy hand against the wrath of my enemies: and thy right hand hath saved me. The Lord will repay for me: thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever: O despise not the work of thy hands.

Prayers for a votive Mass of Thanksgiving

The Roman Missal (Mass in the Extraordinary Form) provides these prayers for a votive Mass of Thanks to God.

Prayer: O God, Whose mercies are beyond number, and of Whose goodness there is an infinite treasure, we give thanks to Your sovereign Majesty for the gifts You have bestowed on us, and beg for Your continued clemency, that, as You grant the petitions of those who ask You, You will never forsake them, but will prepare them for the reward to come. Through our Lord Jesus Christ Your Son Who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Ghost, one God forever and ever. Amen.

Secret: Accept, O Lord, this fragrant sacrifice, together with the thanks which we render to You; evermore keep from harm those whom You have deigned graciously to hear and to preserve; and grant that they may serve You and love You more and more. Through our Lord Jesus Christ Your Son Who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Ghost, one God forever and ever. Amen.

Postcommunion: O God, You do not permit those who hope in You to be afflicted beyond endurance, but listen kindly to their prayers; we thank You for having heard our requests and granted our desires, and devoutly entreat You that what we have received may make us worthy to be delivered from all adversities. Through our Lord Jesus Christ Your Son Who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Ghost, one God forever and ever. Amen.

Te Deum Laudamus

Te Deum laudamus: * te Dóminum confitémur.

Te ætérnum Patrem * omnis terra venerátur.

Tibi omnes Ángeli, * tibi Cæli, et univérsæ Potestátes:

Tibi Chérubim et Séraphim * incessábili voce proclámant:

(bow head) Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus * Dóminus Deus Sábaoth.

Pleni sunt cæli et terra * maiestátis glóriæ tuæ.

Te gloriósus * Apostolórum chorus,

Te Prophetárum * laudábilis númerus,

Te Mártyrum candidátus * laudat exércitus.

Te per orbem terrárum * sancta confitétur Ecclésia,

Patrem * imménsæ maiestátis;

Venerándum tuum verum * et únicum Fílium;

Sanctum quoque * Paráclitum Spíritum.

Tu Rex glóriæ, Christe. * Tu Patris sempitérnus es Fílius.

(During the following verse all make a profound bow) Tu, ad liberándum susceptúrus hóminem: * non horruísti Vírginis úterum.

Tu, devícto mortis acúleo, * aperuísti credéntibus regna cælórum.

Tu ad dexteram Dei sedes, * in glória Patris.

Iudex créderis * esse ventúrus.

(Kneel for the following verse) Te ergo quæsumus, tuis fámulis súbveni, * quos pretióso ságuine redemísti.

ÆtéRNA fac cum Sanctis tuis * in glória numerári.

Salvum fac pópulum tuum, Dómine, * et bénedic hereditáti tuæ.

Et rege eos, * et extólle illos usque in ætérnum.

Per sínghulos dies * benedícimus te.

(During the following verse, by local custom, all make a profound bow.) Et
laudámus nomen tuum in sæculum, * et in sæculum sæculi.

Dignáre, Dómine, die isto * sine peccáto nos custodíre.

Miserére nostri, Dómine, * miserére nostri.

Fiat misericórdia tua, Dómine, super nos, * quemádmódum sperávimus in te.

In te, Dómine, sperávi: * non confúndar in ætérnum.

St. Francis of Assisi's Prayer of Thanksgiving

You are holy, Lord, the only God,

and Your deeds are wonderful.

You are strong.

You are great.

You are the Most High.

You are Almighty.

You, Holy Father are King of heaven and earth.

You are Three and One, Lord God, all Good.

You are Good, all Good, supreme Good, Lord God, living and true.

You are love. You are wisdom.

You are humility. You are endurance.

You are rest. You are peace.

You are joy and gladness.

You are justice and moderation.

You are all our riches, and You suffice for us.

You are beauty.

You are gentleness.

You are our protector.

You are our guardian and defender.

You are our courage. You are our haven and our hope.

You are our faith, our great consolation.

You are our eternal life, Great and Wonderful Lord,

God Almighty, Merciful Saviour.

*In all things give thanks;
for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus
concerning you all.*

1 Thessalonians 5:18