Celebrating Thanksgiving

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The hustle and bustle of how we celebrate holidays in America leaves us so busy in preparing and enjoying the food and activities that we can lose the meaning behind the holiday. It's important to include in the festivities why we celebrate and pass it on to our children. The richness of heritage and history must be valued and protected. It brings strength.



The tradition of Thanksgiving originates in Europe. It was a time to celebrate and thank God for His provision. In 1541, the Spanish explorer, Francisco de Coronado and his men held a thanksgiving celebration in what is now Texas. With the landing of the Jamestown settlers in 1607, a thanksgiving event took place. Americans are most familiar with the Pilgrims and their Native American guests as the first thanksgiving celebration in 1621. It wasn't until 1863 when President Abraham Lincoln set the last Thursday of November as the nation's annual day of Thanksgiving. In Lincoln's address to the nation, he stated the tendency to forget where our blessings come from and stressed the importance of observing a time of remembrance and gratitude to God.

Thanksgiving is commonly celebrated with a roast turkey at the center, surrounded with all the "trimmings" including the traditional pumpkin pie. Parades and football games are part of the tradition. With effort, the origin and meaning of Thanksgiving can be included in our gatherings. The importance of this will help refocus our attention on what is important: being thankful. Reading a brief historical account or a children's book is a wonderful way to observe the origin of Thanksgiving and why we celebrate. Children can learn to grasp the lives of the Pilgrims beyond the buckled hats and shoes so often lovingly portrayed in magazines, books, and décor. All will gain understanding of the sacrifice, perseverance, courage, and resoluteness that the Pilgrims endured through their hardships. This will only serve to help bring perspective, helping

all to find something to be thankful for despite life’s challenges.

Another way to observe the meaning of Thanksgiving is for a child to create a memory book that may be added to each year. A very young child can begin by drawing a picture of what he or she is thankful for or include photographs. Older children can journal their thoughts or join with the adults at the meal, taking turns stating something they are thankful for. Communication such as this has a way of creating a peaceful and joyous day by reducing the stress of busyness and focusing on what is really important.

Sharing provisions by inviting a neighbor for Thanksgiving dinner or bringing the meal to someone who is alone is an act of kindness that makes us feel good and helps a child understand the importance of caring and sharing with others. Local food pantries and churches often have food drives or Thanksgiving dinners where families may volunteer to help.

Lastly, it is most important to say a prayer of thanksgiving on this holiday, remembering with sobriety the reason we celebrate.

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