

Last Sunday of Pentecost The Rev. Dr. Darcy Williams @ Emmanuel Chestertown 21 November 2021
 (Thanksgiving Propers)
 Readings: Joel 21:21-27 Psalm 126 1 Timothy 2:1-7 Matthew 6:25-33

Almost 2000 years ago, the Apostle Paul wrote these words to Timothy: *First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone,*

This morning I did not have to be reminded to make supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings for everyone -- they have been the words of my heart and on my lips for weeks.

I look around this beautiful and historic church building, and I see the results of centuries of love and care. I look around and see a community of faith that has stayed together, supporting each other in prayer, supplications, intercessions, and good works through a pandemic that closed the doors of businesses and churches, and took 769,000 lives in the US alone. I look around and see a community that continues to reach out beyond our doors to be a bright spot in the wider community providing help to those in need, a community that through perseverance, dedication, hard work, and a lot of imagination, managed to hold Emmanuel's Christmas Bazaar and raise thousands of dollars to support the work of our two local beneficiaries: Meals on Wheels and Community Mediation Upper Shore.

It was wonderful to walk through the Parish Hall the past two Fridays to hear the chatter and see groups -- mostly our women -- making holiday centerpieces, receiving boxes and bags of donated homemade baked goods, carefully arranging all of the beautiful knit goods, and pricing the donated Elegant Elephants for sale. Although it was not nearly as lively as a regular bazaar year, the sights and sounds were a welcome reminder of what has been and what we hope will soon be again.

So I offer my intercessions, prayers, supplications and thanksgivings for everyone who cooked, baked, canned, sewed, knitted, polished, priced, donated, worked, bought, braved the weather, or just came to Emmanuel to make our outdoor Bazaar the special time that it was.

I give my intercessions, prayers, supplications and thanksgivings for a parish that cares so much about others that they give of themselves in this way -- not for personal glory, but because it is God's work that we do. We are not a social club that does good works. We are followers of Jesus of Nazareth. He commands us to love God and to love each other. He commands us to show our Christian faith in real time, in real ways, and let our works reflect our beliefs to people around us.

I offer my intercessions, prayers, supplications and thanksgivings for the opportunity to be here with you, to be a part of this community of faith, and to continue to serve as your priest during this interim time. I am grateful for all who volunteer in the many ministries of the parish. Our worship services are enhanced through the efforts and talents of the Altar Guild, the Flower Guild, our choir and musicians, and our returning acolytes. I am grateful for those who read the lessons and the prayers, those who serve as Eucharistic ministers and visitors usher, and all of our ushers who ensure that our visitors feel as welcome as our parishioners do. I am grateful for those to reach out to the homebound with phone calls, visits, and cards, and to those who take the time to be teach our children letting them know they are welcomed and an important part of our community.

I offer my intercessions, prayers, supplications and thanksgivings for my family my friends, and all of you who support me, and keep me grounded, challenging me to be a better priest, to remember what is important and to take time to enjoy the beauty of God's creation.

I am thankful to be in a parish that cares enough to stretch themselves, to learn and grow, to ask questions, to seek answers, and to reach across the boundaries that seek to separate us.

On this Sunday, the last Sunday after Pentecost and Sunday before Thanksgiving Day, I offer this excerpt from Howard Thurman's Litany of Thanksgiving:

Today, I make my Sacrament of Thanksgiving.

I begin with the simple things of my days: 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 I make an act of Thanksgiving this day!

I bring to mind all the warmth of humankind that I have known: My mother's arms, The strength of my father, The playmates of my childhood, The wonderful stories brought to me from the lives of many who talked of days gone by when fairies and giants and all kinds of magic held sway; The tears I have shed, the tears I have seen; The excitement of laughter and the twinkle in the eye with its reminder that life is good.

For all these I make an act of Thanksgiving this day.

I finger one by one the messages of hope that awaited me at the crossroads: The smile of approval from those who held in their hands the reins of my security; The tightening of the grip in a single handshake when I feared the step before me in the darkness; The crucial word said, the simple sentence from an open page when my decision hung in the balance.

For all these I make an act of Thanksgiving this day.

I linger over the meaning of my own life and the commitment to which I give the loyalty of my heart and mind: The little purposes in which I have shared with my loves, my desires, my gifts; The big hope that never quite deserts me, that I and all humanity will study war no more, that love and tenderness and all the inner graces of Almighty affection will cover the life of the children of God as the waters cover the sea.

All these and more than mind can think and heart can feel, I make as my sacrament of Thanksgiving to Thee, Our Father, in humbleness of mind and simplicity of heart.