

Thanksgiving Eve –November 22, 2023
Text: Deuteronomy 8:1-10
Theme: What Are You Thankful For?

Do you ever do that thing at Thanksgiving that many families do? Go around the table and have everyone say something they are thankful for? Sometimes it is pretty trite. “I’m thankful for pumpkin pie.” Sometimes people are embarrassed and say silly stuff like “I’m thankful that the Cubs have a new manager.” If you do the “what I’m thankful for” thing tomorrow, I encourage you to take it seriously. Think about it carefully tonight so that you are ready tomorrow. For what are you truly thankful? Health? Financial wellbeing? Family? All of that is great stuff but what about faith? Are you thankful that God reached through His Word and His Holy Baptismal waters and created faith in you? Without faith, nothing else would matter.

God has chosen you just as surely as he chose the people of Israel who were held in slavery in Egypt. But it happened so long ago that we sometimes forget the importance of it all. We often act as though we deserve what we have including eternal salvation.

In our Old Testament reading for today, we hear a part of Moses’ sermon to his people as they are about to enter The Promised Land. God looked down upon our ancestors in slavery in Egypt and chose to lead them out of slavery. He stayed with them for the whole

journey to the Promised Land. Their clothing did not wear out and their feet did not swell. They went through many difficulties from not enough water to not enough food and God took care of it all. They faced enemies and God vanquished them. In God's time and in God's way, they arrived in the Promised Land and all their foes fell before them beginning with the walls of Jericho. They took possession of the Promised Land exactly as God had said they would.

God has promised to lead us out of the slavery of sin into Paradise. He is with us every step of the way. That is what it means to have faith. We believe that Jesus Christ has paid the price of our sin when He died on the cross, and the rest of this life is a journey to our reward. We will face difficulties. We will face opposition just like the people of Israel but we cannot be stopped. The Church will not collapse and the people of God will not be destroyed because the Lord God is with us. I know we live in times that seem as though everything is collapsing around our ears. There are wars and rumors of war. There are naysayers who declare that the time of the Church is over. It's all a lie. God is with us as he always has been and He will stay with us until the day we cross into The Promised Land.

When you think about what you're thankful for, put faith at the top of your list because without faith, none of the other stuff would matter. If you're journey ended in Hell, nothing in this life would be

much to be thankful for. All of our thanks stems from what God has already done for us on the cross and that motivates us not only to thank Him but to serve and obey Him as well. He has granted us His Holy Spirit to be with us and even in us on the journey. He nourishes us not with manna and quail but with the body and blood of His Son. He quenches our thirst, not with water from a rock but with Holy Baptism that continually washes us clean of sin moment by moment. What are you thankful for? What else is there to be thankful for?