

# Giving Thanks

Dear Friends

This is a month for remembering. At the beginning of November we at the Abbey remember those people whom we reckon the heroines and heroes of our faith, the people we call saints. At the same time we remember our loved ones who have died. Later in the month we remember those who died in war, especially those who died in the defence of this nation. As November coincides with the season of harvest, it is also a time to remember with thanks all the fruits of this good earth that we enjoy. In my home country, the U.S.A., we have our Thanksgiving holiday on the fourth Thursday in November.

For me the important thread that runs through all of this November remembering is thanks. Although we mourn our dead, be they family, friends, or soldiers, we give thanks for their lives, for all the good they did, and, especially in the case of the soldiers, for the sacrifices they made for us. Surrounded by the bounty of the earth in this agricultural area in which we live, we give thanks for our harvests.

But have you ever stopped to think that we ought to give thanks for virtually all that exists, above all our lives? None of us asked to be born. Our lives are essentially gifted to us. Since our lives are a gift, so all that we come to possess through what we reckon as our own efforts is a gift, for the talents we were born with, talents that enable us to earn our living, are gifted to us at birth.

I'm sure you can see where I am going with this. It is my belief that our lives and all that exists in what we call creation are God's gift to us. Even though creation contains much we view as bad, such as Covid-19, God has, in ways we often cannot understand, created for good all that is. Above all, I would urge you to consider that we exist because God in his infinite love wanted to share his life with us, for sharing is an essential part of love. Furthermore, just as the heart of God is love, so God has created us to love. This means that when we are engaged in acts of love for our neighbours we are doing what we were created to do: we are in harmony with God. Being in harmony or partnership with God is what alone can fulfil us in life.

Many people do not believe this. They think we are here as a result of chance. But this view is every bit a matter of faith, faith that God is not there.

People sometimes ask me how to find faith in God. I often reply by recommending them to count their blessings, to give thanks for the good things in their life. There is something about weighing up our blessings that puts us in a thoughtful frame of mind. If we think deeply about these blessings, we see that there are so many that have just come to us through no effort of ours. Perhaps the chief among these is our life, for as I said earlier, we did not ask to be born. As I think of all my blessings, above all the blessing of love, I find myself being led to God, for I can't say thank you to chance or fortune. And if we come to see that all these blessings come from a God who loves us, a God who created us out of his love for us, we can then be led to see that this is a love that will never abandon us, since God's love never ends. For this reason the love of God is a love that always seeks to restore and recreate us. It is not a love that promises us an easy ride. But, by its very nature, it promises us that, if we trust in this love which was so completely exemplified in the life of Jesus, this love, Jesus's love, will lead us to new, restored life, both in this world and the next.

May God guide each one of us as we seek him by giving thanks.

Yours in Christ,  
Charles Brown