



From the House...

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Happy Thanksgiving

(from our family to yours)

When the pilgrims first set foot on Plymouth Rock in December of 1620, they were met with the promise of religious freedom but also the harsh reality of the winter season. Very quickly they realized they were not equipped to survive in the New World as they would have desired, and the results were devastating. Only a few more than half of the 102 members of the Plymouth colony survived the first winter. However, in a remarkable act of faith, when the ship's crew sailed back to England the next spring, every pilgrim decided to stay in the new land. Fortunately, the local Native Americans befriended the settlers and taught them how to live off of the land and how to survive the barren winters. The pilgrims were prepared when the next cold season rolled around, and for that, they were thankful. To celebrate, the Native Americans were invited to a feast of gratitude for the bountiful season.

As children, we have all been taught the basic story of the pilgrims, the Native Americans, and that first Thanksgiving. However, our young imaginations could not grasp the humble reality that the pilgrims were just thankful to be alive, to have food to eat. The Thanksgiving Feast as we know it today, did not become an annual event for many years. Instead it was an event that was celebrated on occasion. One such occasion came on December 18, 1777, as General George Washington's troops arrived at Valley Forge, PA. The soldiers and colonists had much to be thankful for, as two months earlier, the British surrendered at the Battle of Saratoga, essentially assuring colonial independence. It was over 150 years after the pilgrims first sat down with their Native American friends to give thanks, but the theme of gratitude and humility remained and survived.

The modern-day Thanksgiving celebration was designated in 1863 by Congress to take place on the fourth Thursday in November each year. It was designated as "a day of Thanksgiving and Praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the heavens" according to a proclamation issued by President Abraham Lincoln. Today, Thanksgiving celebrations continue to reflect the New World settlers' spirit of humility and bring together those for whom we are most thankful...our family and friends.

As we take time to be thankful for our family and friends, we should also take time to be thankful for the country we live in, for example, a country that encourages its citizens to express their beliefs without fearing persecution. We have courageous men and women whose pride for their country is expressed everyday in the defense of their freedom that we are so blessed to share as a nation. I know we are all thankful for these men and women for their willingness to protect not just us, but our freedoms.

In our great country, we also have the ability to mark a ballot when picking our leaders rather than having to fight battles. We can worship how we choose and whom we choose. We have the right to gripe about the government in America just

as freely as we can praise it, without fear. We can debate each political law thanks to our system of representative democracy.

These are just a few of the things we have to be thankful for as Americans. So, when you find yourself breathing in the aromas of the turkey in the oven and all of the other foods that will be served with it for your Thanksgiving Day this year, please remember to take a moment to acknowledge all that you have to be grateful for.

Leasa, Savanna, and I wish you and your family a blessed and safe Thanksgiving.