

## Bishop's E-Message for October 2011

In October, the commemorations of renewers of the church abound: Francis of Assisi, William Tyndale, Henry Melchior Muhlenberg, Teresa of Avila, Ignatius of Antioch, Luke the Evangelist, James of Jerusalem, Nicolai, Heermann, and Gerhardt (hymnwriters), and Simon and Jude (apostles). Quite a list! You don't recognize all the names and have a little time on your hands? Use Wikipedia to gain insight into these people and their lives; they are our fore-parents in the faith, and each has a unique faith-story to tell.

At the month's end, we mark Reformation Sunday. And near its beginning, Canadians mark a Day of National Thanksgiving. It is to this Thanksgiving theme that I want to turn our attention for a few moments. Do you sense a spirit of thanksgiving welling up in you? Is that thanksgiving spirit spilling over in the people around you? Or is Thanksgiving simply October's long weekend and possibly the first family gathering around roasted turkey in the season of autumn?

Thanksgiving Day invites us to self-declare if our glasses are half-full or half-empty. It is an invitation (in the words of the old Gospel song) to "count your blessings, name them every one." When television programs or movies depict Thanksgiving, it usually is an extended family, gathered around an over-large table laden with a feast, inviting each person to share one thing for which they are thankful. Then comes the "saying of grace" with everyone holding hands – perhaps the one time in the year that such a ritual takes place. Quaint. Picturesque.

Remember that thanksgiving spirit I spoke about? Is it in you to give thanks? Or do life in general, and a few things in particular, have you "numbed out"? You know the feeling: going through your days on automatic pilot, not thinking too deeply, just keeping on keeping on. Yet in the midst of the year it has been - wildfires, floods, global economic crisis, the largest individual indebtedness of all time, a church in greater or lesser crisis, and even (my goodness!) Lloyd Robertson stepping down as CTV news anchor – the command, and indeed the duty, is to give thanks. To give thanks with a grateful heart. Heads anointed with oil, and cups overflowing. Surely goodness and mercy has followed us all the days of our life.

In remembrance of thanksgiving then, a prayer of Julian of Norwich:

In you, Father all-mighty, we have our preservation and our bliss. In you, Christ, we have our restoring and saving. You are our mother, brother, and savior. In you, our Lord the Holy Spirit, is marvelous and plenteous grace. You are our clothing; for love you wrap us and embrace us. You are our maker, our lover, our keeper. Teach us to believe that by your grace all shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well. [Occasional Services for the Assembly – ELW, page 411].

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