

Column

As Thanksgiving approaches, we might reflect on Paul's words in Philippians 1:3: "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you." Here Paul is addressing Christian friends in Philippi.

Philippi was the location of the first church Paul planted in Europe. A business woman named Lydia and the local jailor were some of its first members.

As the years passed, those in this congregation proved themselves to be friends indeed to Paul. Not long before he wrote the letter to the Philippians, one of their own had brought Paul a monetary gift while he was in prison.

Still in prison, he pens the lovely words I have just quoted: "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you." How might these words be helpful to us? After all, we've all been enriched by a great number of people.

Some of these might be those who directed us to Christ and nurtured us in the Christian faith. Others might be dear friends in congregations of which we were once a part. Some may be still serving the Lord on Planet Earth; others may be praising God but on another shore and in a greater light. It doesn't matter. What matters is that we remember them and give thanks for their life, always, but especially at Thanksgiving.

Having been at my present post at St. Luke's Church for coming up on a third of a century, I have plenty of people to remember and for which to give thanks, many now with the Lord. Indeed, I walk into the church alone and look out at the pews I can remember where many of them sat. In the words of the writer of Hebrews, I am "compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses." Their example of faithfulness and service encourages me to carry on to the finish line.

"Friends on earth, friends above, Lord, I thank thee." For whom might you give thank this Thanksgiving?

O most merciful Father, who hast blessed the labours of the husbandman in the returns of the fruits of the earth; We give thee humble and hearty thanks for this bounty; beseeching thee to continue thy loving-kindness to us, that our land may still yield her increase, to thy glory and our comfort; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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