

## Column

Memories and holidays seem to go hand in hand. As Thanksgiving approaches, two memories come to mind, one when I was in the first grade, the second when I was in the grade following.

The first is of a teacher putting up a bulletin board in the school cafeteria. It was of the first Thanksgiving in 1621 in what is now Plymouth, Mass. Of course, harvest colors predominated, and there were Pilgrims and Indians, each in their distinctive dress, preparing for a festive meal.

Oddly enough, what sticks out in my mind as much as the scene itself was the teacher who was putting it up. She had Scotch tape stuck on four of her fingers. She would take these pieces of tape with her other hand as she deftly secured the characters to the cork board. I suppose she had put up so many displays that she had it

down to a science. As a five-year-old, I was fascinated as I watched her work.

This bulletin board set the stage for our classroom teacher telling how our American holiday of Thanksgiving got its start. The story she told was skewed, but it was the received one at the time. Much later I learned that the first Thanksgiving observance had in fact taken place in Virginia, not in Massachusetts.

The REAL story is that a year before the Pilgrims stepped foot on American soil a group of English settlers led by Captain John Woodlief landed at what is now Berkeley Plantation, 24 miles southwest of Richmond, Va., and held a day of thanksgiving. There was no sharing a meal with America's indigenous people. Rather, it was a day set apart for prayer.

So compelling was Virginia's claim, that President John F. Kennedy, himself a New Englander, in his 1963 Thanksgiving

proclamation issued 17 days before his death read: “Over three centuries ago, our forefathers in Virginia and in Massachusetts, far from home in a lonely wilderness, set aside a time of thanksgiving.”

My other early memory of Thanksgiving came the following year when I was in the second grade. Under the direction of our teacher, we began saving soft drink caps at the beginning of November. As Thanksgiving approached, we arranged them on a poster board in the shape of a turkey. Once they were in place we painted the cork inside these caps with various colors. The outcome was no great work of art, and I may well be the only one who remembers this art project. Nevertheless, it set the stage for the holiday.

Reflecting on both of these incidents, it seems certain that things with big price tags are not necessarily the ones which create lasting memories. More often than not, these memories

come from ordinary people doing ordinary things with love and devotion and from activities done in the company of others.

Thanksgiving is around the corner. Don't let this pernicious thing called "Black Friday" eclipse the joy of the simple and mundane. Seek the best.

James in his New Testament Epistle writes: "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights [the heavenly bodies], with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." Memories are one of these good gifts. Bring them out at your celebration and give thanks.

*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 thy 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. (The Book of Common Prayer)*

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