

Thanksgiving Proclamations  
1961-1988

THANKSGIVING DAY 1961  
BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

John F. Kennedy

"It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord."

**M**ore than three centuries ago, the Pilgrims, after a year of hardship and peril, humbly and reverently set aside a special day upon which to give thanks to God for their preservation and for the good harvest from the virgin soil upon which they had labored. Grave and unknown dangers remained. Yet by their faith and by their toil they had survived the rigors of the harsh New England winter. Hence they paused in their labors to give thanks for the blessings that had been bestowed upon them by Divine Providence.

This year, as the harvest draws near its close and the year approaches its end, awesome perils again remain to be faced. Yet we have, as in the past, ample reason to be thankful for the abundance of our blessings. We are grateful for the blessings of faith and health and strength and for the imperishable spiritual gifts of love and hope. We give thanks, too, for our freedom as a nation; for the strength of our arms and the faith of our friends; for the beliefs and confidence we share; for our determination to stand firmly for what we believe to be right and to resist mightily what we believe to be base; and for the heritage of liberty bequeathed by our ancestors which we are privileged to preserve for our children and our children's children.

It is right that we should be grateful for the plenty amidst which we live; the productivity of our farms, the output of our factories, the skill of our artisans, and the ingenuity of our investors. But in the midst of our thanksgiving, let us not be unmindful of the plight of those in many parts of the world to whom hunger is no stranger and the plight of those millions more who live without the blessings of liberty and freedom. With some we are able to share our material abundance through our Food-for-Peace Program and through our support of the United Nations Freedom-from-Hunger Campaign. To all we can offer the sustenance of hope that we shall not fail in our unceasing efforts to make this a peaceful and prosperous world for all mankind.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, JOHN F. KENNEDY, President of the United States of America, in consonance with the joint resolution of Congress approved December 26, 1941, which designates the fourth Thursday in November of each year as Thanksgiving Day, do hereby proclaim Thursday, the twenty-third day of November of this year, as a day of national thanksgiving.

I urge all citizens to make this Thanksgiving not merely a holiday from their labors, but rather a day of contemplation. I ask the head of each family to recount to his children the story of the first New England thanksgiving, thus to impress upon future generations the heritage of this nation born in toil, in danger, in purpose, and in the conviction that right and justice and freedom can through man's efforts persevere and come to fruition with the blessing of God.

Let us observe this day with reverence and with prayer that will rekindle in us the will and show us the way not only to preserve our blessings, but also to extend them to the four corners of the earth. Let us by our example, as well as by our material aid, assist all peoples of all nations who are striving to achieve a better life in freedom.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Seal of the United States of America to be affixed.

DONE at the City of Washington this twenty-seventh day of October in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and sixty-one, and of the Independence of the United States of America the one hundred and eighty-sixth.

JOHN F. KENNEDY

# THANKSGIVING DAY 1962 BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

John F. Kennedy

Over three centuries ago in Plymouth, on Massachusetts Bay, the Pilgrims established the custom of gathering together each year to express their gratitude to God for the preservation of their community and for the harvests their labors brought forth in the new land. Joining with their neighbors, they shared together and worshipped together in a common giving of thanks. Thanksgiving Day has ever since been part of the fabric which has united Americans with their past, with each and with the future of all mankind.

It is fitting that we observe this year our own day of thanksgiving. It is fitting that we give our thanks for the safety of our land, for the fertility of our harvests, for the strength of our liberties, for the health of our people. We do so in no spirit of self-righteousness. We recognize that we are the beneficiaries of the toil and devotion of our fathers and that we can pass their legacy on to our children only by equal toil and equal devotion. We recognize too that we live in a world of peril and change - and in so uncertain a time we are all the more grateful for the indestructible gifts of hope and love, which sustain us in adversity and inspire us to labor unceasingly for a more perfect community within this nation and around the earth.

Now, THEREFORE, I, JOHN F. KENNEDY, President of the United States of America, in accord with the joint resolution of Congress, approved December 26, 1941, which designates the fourth Thursday in November of each year as thanksgiving Day, do hereby proclaim Thursday, the twenty-second day of November of this year, as a day of national thanksgiving.

I urge that all observe this day with reverence and with humility.

Let us renew the spirit of the Pilgrims at the first Thanksgiving, lonely in an inscrutable wilderness, facing the dark unknown with a faith borne of their dedication to God and a fortitude drawn from their sense that all men were brothers.

Let us renew that spirit by offering our thanks for uncovenanted mercies, beyond our desert or merit, and by resolving to meet the responsibilities placed upon us.

Let us renew that spirit by sharing the abundance of this day with those less fortunate, in our own land and abroad. Let us renew that spirit by seeking always to establish larger communities of brotherhood.

Let us renew that spirit by preparing our souls for the incertitudes ahead - by being always ready to confront crisis with steadfastness and achievement with grace and modesty.

Let us renew that spirit by concerting our energy and our hope with men and women everywhere that the world may move more rapidly toward the time when Thanksgiving may be a day of universal celebration.

Let us renew that spirit by expressing our acceptance of the limitations of human striving and by affirming our duty to strive nonetheless, as Providence may direct us, toward a better world for all mankind.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the United States of America to be affixed.

DONE at the City of Washington this 7th day of November, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and sixty-two, and of the Independence of the United States of America the one hundred and eighty-seventh.

JOHN F. KENNEDY

# THANKSGIVING DAY 1963 BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

John F. Kennedy

Over three centuries ago, our forefathers in Virginia and in Massachusetts, far from home in a lonely wilderness, set aside a time of thanksgiving. On the appointed day, they gave reverent thanks for their safety, for the health of their children, for the fertility of their fields, for the love which bound them together and for the faith which united them with their God.

So too when the colonies achieved their independence, our first President in the first year of his first Administration proclaimed November 26, 1789, as "a day of public thanksgiving and prayer to be observed by acknowledging with grateful hearts the many signal favors of Almighty god" and called upon the people of the new republic to "beseech Him to pardon our national and other transgressions... to promote the knowledge and practice of true religion and virtue... and generally to grant unto all mankind such a degree of temporal prosperity as He alone knows to be best."

And so too, in the midst of America's tragic civil war, President Lincoln proclaimed the last Thursday of November 1863 as a day to renew our gratitude for America's "fruitful fields," for our "national strength and vigor," and for all our "singular deliverances and blessings."

Much time has passed since the first colonists came to rocky shores and dark forests of an unknown continent, much time since President Washington led a young people into the experience of nationhood, much time since President Lincoln saw the American nation through the ordeal of fraternal war - and in these years our population, our plenty and our power have all grown apace. Today we are a nation of nearly two hundred million souls, stretching from coast to coast, on into the Pacific and north toward the Arctic, a nation enjoying the fruits of an ever-expanding agriculture and industry and achieving standards of living unknown in previous history. We give our humble thanks for this.

Yet, as our power has grown, so has our peril. Today we give our thanks, most of all, for the ideals of honor and faith we inherit from our forefathers - for the decency of purpose, steadfastness of resolve and strength of will, for the courage and the humility, which they possessed and which we must seek every day to emulate. As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words but to live by them.

Let us therefore proclaim our gratitude to Providence for manifold blessings - let us be humbly thankful for inherited ideals - and let us resolve to share those blessings and those ideals with our fellow human beings throughout the world.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, JOHN F. KENNEDY, President of the United States of America, in consonance with the joint resolution of the Congress approved December 26, 1941, 55 Stat. 862 (5 U.S.C. 87b), designating the fourth Thursday of November in each year as Thanksgiving Day, do hereby proclaim Thursday, November 28, 1963, as a day of national thanksgiving.

On that day let us gather in sanctuaries dedicated to worship and in homes blessed by family affection to express our gratitude for the glorious gifts of God; and let us earnestly and humbly pray that He will continue to guide and sustain us in the great unfinished tasks of achieving peace, justice, and understanding among all men and nations and of ending misery and suffering wherever they exist.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Seal of the United States of America to be affixed.

DONE at the City of Washington this fourth day of November, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and sixty-three, and of the Independence of the United States of America the one hundred and eighty-eighth.

JOHN F. KENNEDY

# THANKSGIVING DAY 1964 BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Lyndon B. Johnson

As the harvest season draws to a close and our storehouses bulge with the bounty of the land, it is our desire to observe, in the custom and tradition of our forebears, a special day dedicated to giving thanks to God - a day on which to lay aside our daily tasks and cares and pay joyous homage to Him. We are impelled to raise our voices in His praise and to proclaim our heartfelt gratitude for another year in which we have been blessed with a bountiful harvest, with intellectual, humanitarian, economic, scientific, and technical advances and achievements, and with other gains too numerous to mention.

Although we have been blessed with unsurpassed prosperity, we recognize that poverty and want exist throughout the world - even among us - and we pledge ourselves to the eradication of those evils.

We know, too, that the foundation for a peaceful world is still to be built and that even now armed strife exists in parts of the world. We are saddened that gallant men of our Armed Services have fallen in the eternal quest for peace with freedom, dignity, and justice for all. We share with their bereaved families and friends a sense of tragic loss. In the words of Abraham Lincoln, we resolve "that these honored dead shall not have died in vain," and vow that their loss will spur us ever onward until man's great dream of universal peace is realized.

Yet we are filled with an instinctive impulse to give thanks for

- our free society of free men, free institutions, and free elections;
- our freedom of speech, our freedom of the press, and our freedom to worship as our conscience dictates;
- our emphasis upon the dignity, equality, and worth of man;
- our humanitarian instincts;
- our unalienable right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness;
- our confidence in our ability to meet the challenges of today and of the future.

For these are the things that set us apart as a Nation - that made our Nation great - that will keep our Nation great.

So as our forefathers in Virginia, in New England, and throughout this land have done for more than three and one-half centuries, let us appoint a special day on which all of us, in keeping with the dictates of our own conscience, will give thanks to the Lord for His manifold blessings. And on that day, let us rededicate ourselves to meeting the challenges of the present with the fortitude and faith with which our forefathers met the challenges of the past.

Now, THEREFORE, I, LYNDON B. JOHNSON, President of the United States of America, in consonance with the joint resolution of the Congress approved December 26, 1941, 55 Stat. 862 (5 U.S.C. 87b), designating the fourth Thursday of November in each year as Thanksgiving Day, do hereby proclaim Thursday, November 26, 1964, as a day of national thanksgiving.

On that day, let us gather in our homes and in our places of worship and in other suitable places to give thanks to God for His graciousness and His generosity to us - to pledge to Him our everlasting devotion - to beseech His divine guidance and the wisdom and strength to recognize and follow that guidance - and to pray to Him that the forces of evil, violence, indifference, intolerance, and inhumanity may soon vanish from the face of the earth and that peace, reason, understanding, and good-will may reign supreme throughout the world.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Seal of the United States of America to be affixed.

DONE at the City of Washington this thirteenth day of November in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and sixty-four, and of the Independence of the United States of America the one hundred and eighty-ninth.

LYNDON B. JOHNSON

THANKSGIVING DAY 1965  
BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Lyndon B. Johnson

**F**or all the blessings that have been bestowed upon our nation during the past twelve months, it is a small thing to give thanks to Almighty God.

When the pilgrims first observed Thanksgiving nearly 350 years ago, life was harsh and unrelenting. Cold and sickness had diminished their ranks. Their shelter was crude. Their future was uncertain. Yet when their harvest was abundant, they considered themselves blessed - and their hearts were filled with gratitude.

Today we have much more than an abundant harvest. Our nation is rich and strong and united in the cause of liberty and justice. Our physical comforts are unmatched anywhere in the world. Our medicine has conquered ancient diseases.

In the past year we have added greatly to that national legacy. We have guaranteed the right to vote to all our citizens. We have pledged dignity to our elderly - even in sickness. We have added new dimensions to the education of our youth. We have broadened the horizons of opportunity for our poor. And all the while, we have enjoyed the greatest prosperity in history.

But our real blessings lie not in our bounty. They lie in those steadfast principles that the early pilgrims forged for all generations to come : the belief in the essential dignity of man; the restless search for a better world for all; and the courage - as shown by our sons in Viet Nam today - to defend the cause of freedom wherever on earth it is threatened.

These are the eternal blessings of America. They are the blessings which make us grateful even when the future is uncertain. They are the blessings which give us the strength to complete the unfinished tasks that remain before us.

For these blessings should we thank God most of all.

Now, THEREFORE, I, LYNDON B. JOHNSON, President of the United States of America, in consonance with the Joint Resolution of the Congress approved December 26, 1941, 55 Stat. 862 (5 U.S.C. 87b), designating the fourth Thursday of November in each year as Thanksgiving Day, do hereby proclaim Thursday, November 25, 1965, as a day of national thanksgiving.

On that day, let us gather in our homes and in our places of worship to thank God for His generosity. Let us make ourselves worthy of that generosity by pledging to Him our everlasting devotion. And let us pray to Him that the forces of violence, indifference and intolerance may soon vanish from the face of the earth so that peace and understanding and love may reign supreme.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Seal of the United States of America to be affixed.

DONE at the City of Washington this tenth day of November in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and sixty-five, and of the Independence of the United States of America the one hundred and ninetieth.

LYNDON B. JOHNSON

# THANKSGIVING DAY 1966 BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Lyndon B. Johnson

**T**hey came in tiny wooden ships. On an unknown and alien shore, they planted and built, settled and survived. Then they gave solemn thanks to God for His goodness and bounty. America, well over 300 years ago had its first Thanksgiving Day.

For many years your Presidents have had the opportunity to proclaim Thanksgiving Day, to address themselves to the American people, to remind us of the blessings we enjoy and the thanks that we owe.

If we consider the fervor with which those colonists in Virginia and Massachusetts gave thanks, when they had so little, we are taught how much deeper should our thanks be - when we have so much.

Never, in all the hundreds of Thanksgiving Days, has our nation possessed a greater abundance, not only of material things, but of the precious intangibles that make life worth living.

Never have we been better fed, better housed, better clothed. Never have so many Americans been earning their own way, and been able to provide their families with the marvelous products of a momentous age.

Nor has America ever been healthier, nor had more of her children in school and in college. Nor have we ever had more time for recreation and refreshment of the spirit, nor more ways and places in which to study and to enrich our lives through the arts.

Never have our greatest blessings - our freedoms - been more widely enjoyed by our people. Nor have we ever been closer to the day when every American will have an equal opportunity and an equal freedom.

No, we do not yet have peace in the world. Our men are engaged again, as they have been on so many other Thanksgivings, on a foreign field fighting for freedom, but we can be thankful for their strength that has always kept our liberty secure. We can be thankful for our science and technology that helps to guard our America.

Thanks are better spoken by deed rather than word. Therefore, it behooves a grateful America to share its blessings with our brothers abroad, with those who have so little of the abundance that is ours.

Simple justice and a concern for our fellow man require that we be ready to offer what we can of our food, our resources, our talents, our energies, our skills, and our knowledge to help others build a better life for themselves.

We should thank God that we are able.

Let us, therefore, in this splendid American tradition, thank Him who created us and all that we have. Let us do so with a firm resolve to be worthy of His abundance blessings.

Let us assemble in our homes and in our places of worship, each in his own way.

Let us thank God for the America we are so fortunate to know.

Now, THEREFORE, I, LYNDON B. JOHNSON, President of the United States of America, in consonance with Section 6103 of Title of the United States Code designating the fourth Thursday of November in each

year as Thanksgiving Day, do hereby proclaim Thursday, November 24, 1966, as a day of national thanksgiving.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Seal of the United States of America to be affixed.

DONE at the City of Washington this seventeenth day of October in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and sixty-six, and of the Independence of the United States of America the one hundred and ninety-first.

LYNDON B. JOHNSON

# THANKSGIVING DAY 1967 BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Lyndon B. Johnson

The first American tradition grew out of gratitude for survival. It began - long before independence was a dream - with families responding to an even deeper human impulse. They had suffered the rigors of winter in a new world - and they had endured. They put aside their plows and thanked God for the harvest's bounty.

Over the years, we have made Thanksgiving a unique national occasion. Thanking God for His goodness, we thank Him as well for the promise and the achievement of America.

Our reasons for gratitude are almost without number. We are grateful for the endurance of our government for one hundred and eighty years. We are grateful that the founding fathers planned so wisely for the generations that followed them. We are grateful for a material abundance beyond any mankind has ever known. In our land, the harvests have been good.

Much as we are grateful for these material and spiritual blessings, we are conscious, in this year, of special sorrows and disappointments. We are engaged in a painful conflict in Asia, which was not of our choosing, and in which we are involved in fidelity to a sacred promise to help a nation which has been the victim of aggression. We are proud of the spirit of our men who are risking their lives on Asian soil. We pray that their sacrifice will be redeemed in an honorable peace and the restoration of a land long torn by war.

We are grateful for the tremendous advances which have been made in our generation in social justice and in equality of opportunity, regardless of racial background. But we are saddened by the civil strife which has occurred in our great cities.

Recognizing the trials we have endured and are enduring, I have turned to the Thanksgiving Proclamation of President Abraham Lincoln in 1863. President Lincoln faced, with equal emphasis, both the blessings and the sorrows of the people.

He recommended to his fellow citizens that, "while offering up the ascriptions justly due to Him for such singular deliverances and blessings, they do also, with humble penitence for our national perverseness and disobedience, commend to His tender care all those who have become widows, orphans, mourners, or sufferers in the lamentable civil strife in which we are unavoidably engaged."

In a similar spirit I ask my fellow citizens to join their thankfulness with penitence and humility. Let us implore Almighty God that, to all our other blessings, He may add the blessings of wisdom and perseverance that will lead us to both peace and justice, in the family of nations and in our beloved homeland.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, LYNDON B. JOHNSON, President of the United States of America in consonance with Section 6103 of title 5 of the United States Code designating the fourth Thursday of November in each year as Thanksgiving Day, do hereby proclaim Thursday, November 23, 1967 as a day of national thanksgiving.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this ninth day of November in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and sixty-seven, and of the Independence of the United States of America the one hundred and ninety-second.

LYNDON B. JOHNSON

THANKSGIVING DAY 1968  
BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Lyndon B. Johnson

Americans, looking back on the tumultuous events of 1968, may be more inclined to ask God's mercy and guidance than to offer Him thanks for his blessings.

There are many events in this year that deserve our remembrance, and give us cause for thanksgiving:

- the endurance and stability of our democracy, as we prepare once more for an orderly transition of authority;
- the renewed determination, on the part of millions of Americans to bridge our divisions;
- the beginning of talks with our adversaries, that will, we pray, lead to peace in Vietnam;
- the increasing prosperity of our people, including those who were denied any share in America's blessings in the past;
- the achievement of new breakthroughs in medical science, and new victories over disease.

These events inspire not only the deepest gratitude, but confidence that our nation, the beneficiary of good fortune beyond that of any nation in history, will surmount its present trials and achieve a more just society for its people.

In this season, let us offer more than words of thanksgiving to God. Let us resolve to offer Him the best that is within us - tolerance, respect for life, faith in the destiny of all men to live in peace.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, LYNDON B. JOHNSON, President of the United States of America, in consonance with Section 6103 of title 5 of the United States Code designating the fourth Thursday of November in each year as Thanksgiving Day, do hereby proclaim Thursday, November 28, 1968 as a day of national thanksgiving.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this fifteenth day of November, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and sixty-eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the one hundred and ninety-third.

LYNDON B. JOHNSON

THANKSGIVING DAY 1969  
BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Richard M. Nixon

On October 3, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln invited his fellow citizens to "set apart and observe the last Thursday of November next as a day of Thanksgiving..." This was the year of the battle of Gettysburg and of other major battles between Americans on American soil. To many, this call for a national day of Thanksgiving must have seemed strange, coming as it did at a time of war and bitterness.

Yet Lincoln knew that the act of thanksgiving should not be limited to time of peace and serenity. He knew that it is precisely at those times of hardship when men most need to recognize that the Source of all good constantly bestows His blessings on mankind.

Today, despite our material wealth and well-being, Americans face complex problems unknown before in our nation's history. In giving thanks today, we express gratitude for past bounty and we also confidently face the challenges confronting our own nation and the world because we know we can rely on a strength greater than ourselves.

This year, let us especially seek to rekindle in our respective hearts and minds the spirit of our first settlers who valued freedom above all else, and who found much for which to be thankful when material comforts were meager. We are, indeed, a most fortunate people.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RICHARD NIXON, President of the United States of America, in consonance with Section 6103 of Title 5 of the United States Code designating the fourth Thursday of November in each year as Thanksgiving Day, do hereby proclaim Thursday, November 27, 1969, as a day of national thanksgiving.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this twelfth day of November, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred sixty-nine, and of the Independence of the United States of America the one hundred ninety-fourth.

RICHARD NIXON.

THANKSGIVING DAY 1970  
BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Richard M. Nixon

In 1863 Abraham Lincoln, the 16th President, lifted the downcast view of a war-weary Nation to see the evidence of God's bounty. He proclaimed a day of Thanksgiving to be observed by each American in his own way. President Lincoln wisely knew that a man's declaration of his gratitude to God is, in itself, an act which strengthens the thanksgiver because it renews his own realization of his relationship to his God.

As thanksgiving enriches the individual it must bless his home, community and his country. It is, therefore, appropriate that we set aside such a day this year. All about us, doubts and fears threaten our faith in the principles which are the fiber of our society; we are called upon to prove their truth once again. Such challenges must be seen as opportunities for proof of these verities; such proof can only strengthen our Nation.

Although some may see division, we give thanks that ours is one Nation, of many diverse people, living in unity under the precept E Pluribus Unum. The fulfillment of this national principle, every day, is our task and privilege;

Although some may only see strife, we give thanks that this Nation moves each day closer to peace for all its citizens and all the world;

And we give thanks for God's strength and guidance upon which we confidently rely today and every day.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RICHARD NIXON, President of the United States of America, in accordance with the wish of the Congress as expressed in Section 6103 of Title 5 of the United States Code, do hereby proclaim Thursday, November 26, 1970, as a day of national thanksgiving. I call upon all Americans to give thanks in homes and in places of worship for the many blessings our people enjoy.

We should not forget that for many older citizens, Thanksgiving Day may be less meaningful than it should be because it might be spent alone. For this reason I urge all public officials, voluntary organizations, private groups and families in every part of the country to welcome our senior citizens as special participants in their Thanksgiving Day festivities.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this fifth day of November, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred seventy. And of the Independence of the United States of America the one hundred ninety-fifth.

RICHARD NIXON

# THANKSGIVING DAY 1971 BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Richard M. Nixon

One of the splendid events which shape man's destiny occurred when a small band of people, believing in the essential sanctity of their own being, went in search of a land in which their individuality might be the highest national value, before any arbitrary limitation or duty placed upon some men by the whim or design of others.

They went in search of a land where they might live out their own commitment to their own ideal of human freedom. In the purpose of their search, the human spirit found its ultimate definition, and in the product of their search, its ultimate expression. They found the land they sought, and it was a difficult land, but it was rich. With their sacrifices they brought forth its riches, and laid the foundation for a new nation.

But more than that, they revealed a new possibility for the expression of man's spirit. In the sure unfolding of that possibility man has begun to experience a world in which he may do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with his god forever.

For what those early settlers established, we give thanks in a way which began with them. In their first years on the hard cold edge of man's bright golden-dream, they were tried and their faith was tested. But when their bodies failed, their faith did not.

The stark simple words on a sarcophagus in a little village on the seacoast of Massachusetts tell the story well: "This monument marks the first burying-ground in Plymouth of the passengers of the Mayflower. Here, under cover of darkness, the fast dwindling company laid their dead; leveling the earth above them lest the Indians should learn how many were the graves."

Yet, because mankind was not created merely to survive, in the fact of all hardship and suffering, these men and women - and those of the other early settlements - prevailed. And the settlers gathered to give thanks for God's bounty, for the blessings of life itself, and for the freedom which they so cherished that no hardship could quench it. And now their heritage is ours.

What they dared to imagine for this land came to pass.

What they planted here prospered.

And for our heritage - a land rich with the bountiful blessings of God, and the freedom to enjoy those rich blessings - we give thanks to God Almighty in this time, and for all time.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RICHARD NIXON, President of the United States of America in accordance with the wish of the Congress as expressed in Section 6103 of Title 5 of the United States Code, do hereby proclaim Thursday, November 25, 1971, as a day of national thanksgiving. I call upon all Americans to share this day, to give thanks in homes and in places of worship for the many blessings our people enjoy, to welcome the elderly and less fortunate as special participants in this day's festivities and observances, thereby truly showing our gratitude to God by expressing and reflecting His love.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this fifth day of November, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred seventy-one, and of the Independence of the United States of America the one hundred ninety-sixth.

RICHARD NIXON

# THANKSGIVING DAY 1972 BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Richard M. Nixon

When the first settlers gathered to offer their thanks to the God who had protected them on the edge of a wilderness, they established anew on American shores a thanksgiving tradition as old as Western man himself.

From Moses at the Red Sea to Jesus preparing to feed the multitudes, the Scriptures summon us to words and deeds of gratitude, even before divine blessings are fully perceived. From Washington kneeling at Valley Forge to the prayer of an astronaut circling the moon, our own history repeats that summons and proves its practicality.

Today, in an age of too much fashionable despair, the world more than ever needs to hear America's perennial harvest message: "Take heart! Give thanks! To see clearly about us is to rejoice; and to rejoice is to worship the Father; and to worship Him is to receive more blessings still."

At this thanksgiving time our country can look back with special gratitude across the events of a year which has brought more progress toward lasting peace than any other year for a generation past; and we can look forward with trust in Divine Providence toward the opportunities which peace will bring.

Truly our cup runs over with the bounty of God - our lives, our liberties, and our loved ones; our worldly goods and our spiritual heritage; the beauty of our land, the breadth of our horizons, and the promise of peace that crowns it all. For all of this, let us now humbly give thanks.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RICHARD NIXON, President of the United States of America in consonance with Section 6103 of Title 5 of the United States Code designating the fourth Thursday of November in each year as Thanksgiving Day, do hereby proclaim Thursday, November 23, 1972, as a day of national thanksgiving. I call upon all Americans to assemble in homes and places of worship on this day, to join in offering gratitude for the countless blessings our people enjoy, and to embrace the elderly and less fortunate as special celebrants in the day's events, loving them as we have been loved.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this seventeenth day of November, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred seventy-two, and of the Independence of the United States of America the one hundred ninety-seventh.

RICHARD NIXON

THANKSGIVING DAY 1973  
BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Richard M. Nixon

In the first Thanksgiving, man affirmed his determination to live in God's grace and to act in God's will on the shores of a new land of promise. In this Thanksgiving season we reaffirm that determination.

Time has not dimmed, not circumstance diminished the need for God's hand in all that America may justly endeavor. In times of trial and of triumph that single truth reasserts itself, and a people who have never bowed before men go gladly to their knees in submission to divine power, and in thanks for divine sustenance.

On this Thanksgiving Day we mark the 10th anniversary of the tragic death of President John F. Kennedy. As we give thanks for the bounty and goodness of our land, therefore, let us also pause to reflect on President Kennedy's contributions to the life of this Nation we love so dearly.

Those who celebrated the first thanksgiving had endured hardship and loss, but they kept alive their hope and their faith. Throughout our history, each generation has endured hardship and loss, but our faith and trust in God's providence has remained undiminished. At this first thanksgiving in twelve years in which the United States will have been at peace, we see that God's grace also remain undiminished. For this we give thanks.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RICHARD NIXON, President of the United States of America, in accordance with the wish of the Congress as expressed in Section 6103 of Title 5 of the United States Code, do hereby proclaim Thursday, November 22, 1973, as a day of national thanksgiving, and concurrently, a day of prayer for the memory of John F. Kennedy. Let all Americans unite on this day, giving thanks for the manifold blessings vouchsafed our people, and inviting all of those less fortunate than ourselves to share in those blessings in God's name, for His sake, and for our own.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this sixteenth day of November, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred seventy-three, and of the Independence of the United States of America the one hundred ninety-eighth.

RICHARD NIXON

THANKSGIVING DAY 1974  
BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Gerald R. Ford

America and the world have changed enormously since the first thanksgiving 353 years ago. From a tiny coastal enclave on an untamed continent, we have grown into the mightiest, freest nation in human history. A civilization whose farthest reach was once the earth's uncharted seas has now plumbed the secrets of outer space.

But the fundamental meaning of Thanksgiving still remains the same. It is a time when the differences of a diverse people are forgotten and all Americans join in giving thanks to God for the blessings we share - the blessings of freedom, opportunity and abundance that make America so unique.

This year, in the midst of plenty, we still face serious problems and massive challenges. In giving thanks for the many things we hold dear, let us also pray for the courage, resourcefulness and sense of purpose we will need to continue America's saga of progress, and to be worthy heirs of the Pilgrim spirit. May we, too, find the strength and vision to leave behind us a better world, and an example that will inspire future generations to new achievements.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GERALD R. FORD, President of the United States of America, in accordance with Section 6103 of Title 5 of the United States Code, do hereby proclaim Thursday, November 28, 1974, as a day of national thanksgiving.

I call upon all Americans to gather together in homes and places of worship on this date, to join in offering gratitude for the countless blessings our people enjoy, and to share with the elderly and the unfortunate this special day that brings us all closer together.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this eleventh day of November, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred seventy-four, and of the Independence of the United States of America the one hundred ninety-ninth.

GERALD R. FORD

THANKSGIVING DAY 1975  
BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Gerald R. Ford

Two hundred years ago the frontier colonies of America braced for a long and determined conflict with the strongest military power in the world. The petition of our Founding Fathers for redress of their grievances had been rejected by King and Parliament, and the people of America began the struggle from which emerged this great Nation.

Our Nation is the oldest continuously surviving republic in the world. For 200 years our freedoms have been questioned, challenged, tested and reinforced. These freedoms have shaped our destiny and served as a beacon to other peoples. Our Nation draws its strength from people of every creed, of every color, of every race - native Americans and people from every nation in the world who for two centuries have come to share in the rewards and responsibilities of our American Republic.

On the eve of our 200th year, Thanksgiving Day should be a day of special reflection upon the qualities of heart, mind and character of the men and women who founded and built our great Nation. Let us join in giving thanks for our cultural pluralism. Let us celebrate our diversity and the great strengths that have come from sharing our traditions, our ideas, our resources, our hopes and our dreams. Let us be grateful that for 200 years our people have been dedicated to fulfilling the democratic ideal - dedicated to securing "liberty and justice for all."

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GERALD R. FORD, President of the United States of America, in accord with Section 6103 of Title 5 of the United States Code, do hereby proclaim Thursday, November 27, 1975, as a day of national thanksgiving.

Let each of us, in his own way, join in expressing personal gratitude for the blessings of liberty and peace we enjoy today. In so doing, let us reaffirm our belief in a dynamic spirit that will continue to nurture and guide us as we prepare to meet the challenge of our third century.

I call upon all Americans on this day to gather with family and friends in homes and places of worship and join in offering gratitude for this Nation's countless blessings. I ask that we share with our senior citizens and with those less fortunate than ourselves this special day that brings us all closer together.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this fourth day of November, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred seventy-five, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundredth.

GERALD R. FORD

THANKSGIVING DAY 1976  
BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Gerald R. Ford

**T**raditionally, Americans have set aside a special day to express their gratitude to the Almighty for the blessings of liberty, peace and plenty that have been bestowed upon a grateful Nation.

The early settlers of this land possessed an unconquerable spirit and a reliance on Divine Providence that remains a part of the American character. That reliance, coupled with a belief in ourselves and a love of individual freedom, has brought this nation through two centuries of progress and kept us strong.

As we cross the threshold into our third century as a sovereign and independent Nation, it is especially appropriate that we reaffirm our trust in Him and express our gratitude for the unity, freedom and renewed sense of national pride we enjoy today.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GERALD R. FORD, President of the United States of America, in accord with Section 6103 of Title 5 of the United States Code, do hereby proclaim Thursday, November 25, 1976, as a day of national thanksgiving. I call upon all Americans to join on that day with their friends and families in homes and places of worship throughout the land to offer thanks for the blessings we enjoy.

Let each of us resolve this Thanksgiving Day to make the coming year one in which our every deed will reflect our constant gratitude to God. Let us set a standard of honor, justice, and charity against which all the years of our third century may be measured.

Let us make this Thanksgiving a truly special one.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-fifth day of October, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred seventy-six, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and first.

GERALD R. FORD

THANKSGIVING DAY 1977  
BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Jimmy Carter

Although the first years of America's struggle for independence were often disheartening, our forebears never lost faith in the Creator, in their cause, or in themselves. Upon learning of the American victory at Saratoga in 1777, Samuel Adams composed the first National Thanksgiving proclamation, and the Continental Congress called upon the governors of every state to designate a day when all Americans could join together and express their gratitude for God's providence "with united hearts." By their actions they extended a revered regional custom into a national tradition.

Precisely two centuries have now passed since that time. We have tamed a continent, established institutions dedicated to protecting our liberties, and secured a place of leadership among nations. But we have never lost sight of the principles upon which our Nation was founded. For that reason we can look to the future with hope and confidence.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, JIMMY CARTER, President of the United States of America, in accord with Section 6103 of Title 5 of the United States Code, do hereby proclaim Thursday, November 24, 1977, as Thanksgiving Day. I ask all Americans to gather on that day with their families and neighbors in their homes and in their houses of worship to give thanks for the blessings Almighty God has bestowed upon us.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this eleventh day of November, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred seventy-seven, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and second.

JIMMY CARTER

THANKSGIVING DAY 1978  
BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Jimmy Carter

Since 1621, the people of this country have gathered each year to celebrate with a feast their good fortune in their continuing ability to provide for families and friends.

On this Thanksgiving Day, we reaffirm our faith in our heritage of freedom, and our spirit of sharing.

In the spirit of Thanksgiving, Americans humbly recognize how fortunate we are to be strong - as individuals, and as a nation. It is that strength which allows us to display compassion for those around the world who face difficulties that our forefathers, blessed with the American land, were able to overcome.

While Providence has provided Americans with fertile land and bountiful harvests, other nations and peoples have not been so favored. Each year growing food supplies give us greater cause for giving thanks, yet one person in six worldwide still suffers from chronic hunger and malnutrition.

Two hundred years ago the Continental Congress proclaimed a day of thanks, and asked for deliverance from war. This year, let us observe Thanksgiving in the spirit of peace and sharing, by declaring it a day of Thankful Giving, a day upon which the American people share their plenty with the hungry of other lands.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, JIMMY CARTER, President of the United States of America, in accordance with Section 6103 of Title 5 of the United States Code, do hereby proclaim Thursday, the 23rd of November, 1978, as Thanksgiving Day.

I call upon the Governors, Mayors, and all other State and local officials to broaden the observance of Thanksgiving to include the practice of Thankful giving in their celebration, inviting Americans to share with those abroad who suffer from hunger.

I call upon the American people to make personal donations to religious or secular charities to combat chronic hunger and malnutrition, and to support the concept of Thankful Giving in order that we may one day assure that no individual anywhere will suffer from hunger, and that we may move to a day of universal celebration in a more perfect community within our nation and around the world.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this twentieth day of October, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred seventy-eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and third.

JIMMY CARTER

# THANKSGIVING DAY 1979 BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Jimmy Carter

**T**hanksgiving Day was first celebrated in this land not in a moment of unbridled triumph, but in times of great adversity. The colonies of Massachusetts and Virginia had few material possessions to help them face the dangers of the wilderness. They had no certainty that the harvests for which they gave thanks would be sufficient to carry them through a long winter. Yet they gave thanks to God for what they had and for the hope of this new land.

In the darkest hour of the American Revolution, when the young Republic faced defeat by the strongest military power on Earth, our forefathers also saw fit to give thanks for their blessings. In the midst of a devastating Civil War, President Lincoln proclaimed a day to express gratitude for our "singular deliverances and blessings."

The ensuing years have multiplied our nation's blessings. We have been delivered from repeated perils, and we have been blessed with abundance beyond the imaginings of those who offered thanks in the chill of approaching winter more than three-and-one-half centuries ago.

Succeeding generations have broadened the freedom they cherished and the opportunity they sought, and built a mighty nation on the strong foundations they laid. In this two hundred and fourth year of our independence, we have good reasons for gratitude: for liberty in a world where repression is common, for peace in a world of threats and terror and war, for a bounteous harvest in a world where hunger and despair still stalk much of mankind.

Like those who came before us, we come to give thanks for our singular deliverances and blessings, in a time of both danger and great promise. May we be thankful in proportion to that which we have received, trusting not in our wealth and comforts, but in the strength of our purpose, that all nations might be similarly blessed with liberty and abundance and live in peace.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, JIMMY CARTER, President of the United States of America, do proclaim Thursday, the 22nd of November, 1979 as Thanksgiving Day. I ask all American to give thanks on that day for the blessings Almighty God has bestowed upon us, and seek to be good steward of what we have received.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-eighth day of September, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred seventy-nine, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and fourth.

JIMMY CARTER

THANKSGIVING DAY 1980  
BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Jimmy Carter

**T**he greatest bounty of our Nation is the bounty of our heritage - our diversity as immigrants and descendants of immigrants, our common identity as Americans.

We have set aside one day a year to give thanks for all that we have. Yet Thanksgiving is more than just a day of celebration. It is also a commemoration - of the day America's earliest inhabitants sat down to table with European colonists.

That occasion was historic not only because it established a national holiday, but because it marked the start of a national tradition of cooperation, unity and tolerance.

Even in times of trial and frustration we have much to be thankful for, in our personal lives and in our Nation. As we pause on Thanksgiving to offer thanks to God, we should not forget that we also owe thanks to this country's forefathers who had the vision to join together in Thanksgiving, and who gave us so much of the vision of brotherhood that is ours today.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, JIMMY CARTER, President of the United States of America, do proclaim Thursday, the 27th of November, 1980 as Thanksgiving Day. I call upon all the people of our Nation to give thanks on that day for the blessings Almighty God has bestowed upon us, and to join the fervent prayer of George Washington who as President asked God to "... impart all the blessings we possess, or ask for ourselves to the whole family of mankind."

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this thirteenth day of November, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eighty, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and fifth.

JIMMY CARTER

THANKSGIVING DAY 1981  
BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Ronald W. Reagan

America has much for which to be thankful. The unequalled freedom enjoyed by our citizens has provided a harvest of plenty to this nation throughout its history. In keeping with America's heritage, one day each year is set aside for giving thanks to God for all of His blessings.

On this day of thanksgiving, it is appropriate that we recall the first thanksgiving, celebrated in the autumn of 1621. After surviving a bitter winter, the Pilgrims planted and harvested a bountiful crop. After the harvest they gathered their families together and joined in celebration and prayer with the native Americans who had taught them so much. Clearly our forefathers were thankful not only for the material well-being of their harvest but for this abundance of goodwill as well.

In this spirit, Thanksgiving has become a day when Americans extend a helping hand to the less fortunate. Long before there was a government welfare program, this spirit of voluntary giving was ingrained in the American character. Americans have always understood that, truly, one must give in order to receive. This should be a day of giving as well as a day of thanks.

As we celebrate Thanksgiving in 1981, we should reflect on the full meaning of this day as we enjoy the fellowship that is so much a part of the holiday festivities. Searching our hearts, we should ask what we can do as individuals to demonstrate our gratitude to God for all He has done. Such reflection can only add to the significance of this precious day of remembrance.

Let us recommit ourselves to that devotion to God and family that has played such an important role in making this a great Nation, and which will be needed as a source of strength if we are to remain a great people.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RONALD REAGAN, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim Thursday, November 26, 1981, as Thanksgiving Day.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this twelfth day of November, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eighty-one, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and sixth.

RONALD REAGAN

THANKSGIVING DAY 1982  
BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Ronald W. Reagan

Two hundred years ago, the Congress of the United States issued a Thanksgiving Proclamation stating that it was "the indispensable duty of all nations" to offer both praise and supplication to God. Above all other nations of the world, America has been especially blessed and should give special thanks. We have bountiful harvests, abundant freedoms, and a strong, compassionate people.

I have always believed that this anointed land was set apart in an uncommon way, that a divine plan placed this great continent here between the oceans to be found by people from every corner of the Earth who had a special love of faith and freedom. Our pioneers asked that He would work His will in our daily lives so America would be a land of morality, fairness, and freedom.

Today we have more to be thankful for than our pilgrim mothers and fathers who huddled on the edge of the New World that first Thanksgiving Day could ever dream. We should be grateful not only for our blessings, but for the courage and strength of our ancestors which enable us to enjoy the lives we do today.

Let us reaffirm through prayers and actions our thankfulness for America's bounty and heritage.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RONALD REAGAN, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim Thursday, November 25, 1982, as a National Day of Thanksgiving and I call upon all of our citizens to set aside that day for appropriate expressions of thanksgiving.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this 27th day of Sept. in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eighty-two, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and seventh.

RONALD REAGAN

THANKSGIVING DAY 1983  
BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Ronald W. Reagan

Since the Pilgrims observed the initial Thanksgiving holiday in 1621, this occasion has served as a singular expression of the transcending spiritual values that played an instrumental part in the founding of our country.

One hundred and twenty years ago, in the midst of a great and terrible civil conflict, President Lincoln formally proclaimed a national day of Thanksgiving to remind those "insensible to the ever watchful providence of almighty God" of this Nation's bounty and greatness. Several days after the dedication of the Gettysburg battlefield, the United States celebrated its first national Thanksgiving. Every year since then, our Nation has faithfully continued this tradition. The time has come once again to proclaim a day of thanksgiving, an occasion for Americans to express gratitude to their God and their country.

In his remarks at Gettysburg, President Lincoln referred to ours as a Nation "under God." We rejoice in the fact that, while we have maintained separate institutions of church and state over our 200 years of freedom, we have at the same time preserved reverence for spiritual beliefs. Although we are a pluralistic society, the giving of thanks can be a true bond of unity among our people. We can unite in gratitude for our individual freedoms and individual faiths. We can be united in gratitude for our Nation's peace and prosperity when so many in this world have neither.

As was written in the first Thanksgiving Proclamation 120 years ago, "No human counsel hath devised nor hath any mortal hand worked out these great things. They are the gracious gifts of the Most High God." God has blessed America and her people, and it is appropriate we recognize this bounty.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RONALD REAGAN, President of the United States of America, in the spirit of the Pilgrims, President Lincoln, and all succeeding Presidents, do hereby proclaim Thursday, November 24, 1983, as a National Day of Thanksgiving, and I call upon Americans to affirm this day of thanks by their prayers and their gratitude for the many blessings upon this land and its people.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this 15th day of Sept., in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eighty-three, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and eighth.

RONALD REAGAN.

THANKSGIVING DAY 1984  
BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Ronald W. Reagan

As we remember the faith and values that made America great, we should recall that our tradition of Thanksgiving is older than our Nation itself. Indeed, the native American Thanksgiving antedated those of the new Americans. In the words of the eloquent Seneca tradition of the Iroquois, "...give it your thought, that with one mind we may now give thanks to Him our Creator."

From the first Pilgrim observance in 1621, to the nine years before and during the American Revolution when the Continental Congress declared days of Fast and Prayer and days of Thanksgiving, we have turned to Almighty God to express our gratitude for the bounty and good fortune we enjoy as individuals and as a nation. America truly has been blessed.

This year we can be especially thankful that real gratitude to God is inscribed, not in proclamations of government, but in the hearts of all our people who come from every race, culture, and creed on the face of the Earth. And as we pause to give thanks for our many gifts, let us be tempered by humility and by compassion for those in need, and let us reaffirm through prayer and action our determination to share our bounty with those less fortunate.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RONALD REAGAN, President of the United States of America, in the spirit and tradition of the Iroquois, the Pilgrims, the Continental Congress, and past Presidents, do hereby proclaim Thursday, November 22, 1984, as a day of National Thanksgiving. I call upon every citizen of this great Nation to gather together in homes and places of worship to celebrate, in the words of 1784, "with grateful hearts ... the mercies and praises of their all Bountiful Creator..."

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this nineteenth day of October, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eighty-four, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and ninth.

RONALD REAGAN

# THANKSGIVING DAY 1985 BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Ronald W. Reagan

Although the time and date of the first American thanksgiving observance may be uncertain, there is no question but that this treasured custom derives from our Judeo-Christian heritage. "Unto Three, O God, do we give thanks," the Psalmist sang, praising God not only for the "wondrous works" of His creation, but for loving guidance and deliverance from dangers.

A band of settlers arriving in Maine in 1607 held a service of thanks for their safe journey, and twelve years later settlers in Virginia set aside a day of thanksgiving for their survival. In 1621 Governor William Bradford created the most famous of all such observances at Plymouth Colony when a bounteous harvest prompted him to proclaim a special day "to render thanksgiving to the Almighty God for all His blessings." The Spaniards in California and the Dutch in New Amsterdam also held services to give public thanks to God.

In 1777, during our War of Independence, the Continental Congress set aside a day for thanksgiving and praise for our victory at the battle of Saratoga. It was the first time all the colonies took part in such an event on the same day. The following year, upon news that France was coming to our aid, George Washington at Valley Forge prescribed a special day of thanksgiving. Later, as our first President, he responded to a Congressional petition by declaring Thursday, November 26, 1789, the first Thanksgiving Day of the United States of America.

Although there were many state and national thanksgiving days proclaimed in the ensuing years, it was the tireless crusade of one woman, Sarah Josepha Hale, that finally led to the establishment of this beautiful feast as an annual nationwide observance. Her editorials so touched the heart of Abraham Lincoln that in 1863 - even in the midst of the civil War - he enjoined his countrymen to be mindful of their many blessings, cautioning them not to forget "the source from which they come," that they are "the gracious gifts of the Most High God..." Who ought to be thanked "with one heart and one voice by the whole American People."

It is in that spirit that I now invite all Americans to take part again in this beautiful tradition with its roots deep in our history and deeper still in our hearts. We manifest our gratitude to God for the many blessings he has showered upon our land and upon its people.

In this season of Thanksgiving we are grateful for our abundant harvests and the productivity of our industries; for the discoveries of our laboratories; for the researches of our scientists and scholars; for the achievements of our artists, musicians, writers, clergy, teachers, physicians, businessmen, engineers, public servants, farmers, mechanics, artisans, and workers of every sort whose honest toil of mind and body in a free land rewards them and their families and enriches our entire Nation.

Let us thank God for our families, friends, and neighbors, and for the joy of this very festival we celebrate in His name. Let every house of worship in the land and every home and every heart be filled with the spirit of gratitude and praise and love on this Thanksgiving Day.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RONALD REAGAN, President of the United States of America, in the spirit and tradition of the Pilgrims, the Continental Congress, and past Presidents, do hereby proclaim Thursday, November 28, 1985, as a day of national Thanksgiving. I call upon every citizen of this great Nation to gather together in homes and places of worship and offer prayers of praise and gratitude for the many blessings almighty God has bestowed upon our beloved country.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this fifteenth day of November, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eighty-five, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and tenth.

RONALD REAGAN

# THANKSGIVING DAY 1986 BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Ronald W. Reagan

Perhaps no custom reveals our character as a Nation so clearly as our celebration of Thanksgiving Day. Rooted deeply in our Judeo-Christian heritage, the practice of offering thanksgiving underscores our unshakable belief in God as the foundation of our Nation and our firm reliance upon Him from Whom all blessings flow. Both as individuals and as a people, we join with the Psalmist in song and praise: "Give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good."

One of the most inspiring portrayals of American history is that of George Washington on his knees in the snow at Valley Forge. That moving image personifies and testifies to our Founders' dependence upon Divine Providence during the darkest hours of our Revolutionary struggle. It was then - when our mettle as a Nation was tested most severely - that the Sovereign and Judge of nations heard our plea and came to our assistance in the form of aid from France. Thereupon General Washington immediately called for a special day of thanksgiving among his troops.

Eleven years later, President Washington, at the request of the Congress, first proclaimed November 26, 1789, as Thanksgiving Day. In his Thanksgiving day Proclamation, President Washington exhorted the people of the United States to observe "a day of public thanksgiving and prayer" so that they might acknowledge "with grateful hearts the many signal favors of Almighty God, especially by affording them an opportunity peaceably to establish a form of government for their safety and happiness." Washington also reminded us that "it is the duty of all nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to obey His will, to be grateful for His benefits, and humbly to implore His protection and favor."

Today let us take heart from the noble example of our first President. Let us pause from our many activities to give thanks to almighty God for our bountiful harvests and abundant freedoms. Let us call upon Him for continued guidance and assistance in all our endeavors. And let us ever be mindful of the faith and spiritual values that have made our Nation great and that alone can keep us great. With joy and gratitude in our hearts, let us sing those stirring stanzas:

O beautiful for spacious skies,  
For amber waves of grain,  
For purple mountain majesties  
Above the fruited plain!  
America! America!  
God shed His grace on thee.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RONALD REAGAN, President of the United States of America, in the spirit of George Washington and the Founders, do hereby proclaim Thursday, November 27, 1986, as a National Day of Thanksgiving, and I call upon every citizen of this great Nation to gather together in homes and places of worship on that day of thanks to affirm by their prayers and their gratitude the many blessings bestowed upon this land and its people.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this thirteenth day of October, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eighty-six, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and eleventh.

RONALD REAGAN

THANKSGIVING DAY 1987  
BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Ronald W. Reagan

Thanksgiving Day is one of our most beloved holidays, an occasion set aside by Americans from earliest times to thank our Maker prayerfully and humbly for the blessings and the care He bestows on us and on our beautiful, bountiful land. Through the decades, through the centuries, in log cabins, country churches, cathedrals, homes, and halls, the American people have paused to give thanks to God, in time of peace and plenty or of danger and distress.

Acknowledgment of dependence on God's favor was, in fact, our fledgling Nation's very first order of business. When the delegates to the First Continental Congress met in Philadelphia in 1774, they overcame discord by uniting in prayer for our country. Despite the differences among them as they began their work, they found common voice in the 35th Psalm, which concludes with a verse of joyous gratitude, "And my tongue shall speak of thy righteousness and of they praise all the day long."

This year, of course, our Thanksgiving Day celebration coincides with the Bicentennial of the Constitution. In 1789 the government established by that great charter of freedom, and "the civil and religious liberty with which we are blessed," were cited by George Washington in the first Presidential Thanksgiving Proclamation as among "the great and various favors" conferred upon us by the Lord and Ruler of Nations. As we thank the God our first President called "that great and glorious Being, who is the beneficent Author of all the good that was, that is, or that will be," we have even greater cause for gratitude than the fresh triumphs that inspired Washington's prose. We have seen the splendor of our natural resource spread across the tables of the world, and we have seen the splendor of freedom cursing with new vigor through the channels of history. The cause for which we give thanks, for which so many of our citizens through the years have given their lives, has endured 200 years - a blessing to us and a light to all mankind.

On Thanksgiving Day, 1987, let us, in this unbroken chain of observance, dedicate ourselves to honor anew the Author of Liberty and to publicly acknowledge our debt to all those who have sacrificed so much in our behalf. May our gratitude always be coupled with petitions for divine guidance and protection for our Nation and with ready help for our neighbors in time of need.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RONALD REAGAN, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim Thursday, November 26, 1987, as a National Day of Thanksgiving, and I call upon the citizens of this great Nation to gather together in homes and places of worship on that day of thanks to affirm by their prayers and their gratitude the many blessings God has bestowed upon us.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-eighth day of July, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eighty-seven, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twelfth.

RONALD REAGAN

# THANKSGIVING DAY 1988 BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Ronald W. Reagan

The celebration of Thanksgiving Day is one of our Nation's most venerable and cherished traditions. Almost 200 years ago, the first President of these United States, George Washington, issued the first national Thanksgiving Day Proclamation under the Constitution and recommended to the American people that they "be devoted to the service of that great and glorious Being, who is the beneficent Author of all the good that was, that is, or that will be." He called upon them to raise "prayers and supplications to the Great Lord and Ruler of Nations," not merely for continued blessings on our own land but on all rulers and nations that they might know "good government, peace, and concord."

A century ago, President Grover Cleveland called for "prayers and song of praise" that would render to God the appreciation of the American people for His mercy and for the abundant harvests and rich rewards He had bestowed upon our Nation through the labor of its farmers, shopkeepers, and tradesmen. Both of these Proclamations included something else as well: a recognition of our shortcomings and transgressions and our dependence, in total and in every particular, on the forgiveness and forbearance of the Almighty.

Today, cognizant of our American heritage of freedom and opportunity, we are again called to gratitude, thanksgiving, and contrition. Thanksgiving Day summons every American to pause in the midst of activity, however necessary and valuable, to give simple and humble thanks to God. This gracious gratitude is the "service" of which Washington spoke. It is a service that opens our hearts to one another as members of a single family gathered around the bounteous table of God's Creation. The images of the Thanksgiving celebrations at America's earliest settlement - of Pilgrim and Iroquois Confederacy assembled in festive friendship - resonate with even greater power in our own day. People from every race, culture, and creed on the face of the Earth now inhabit this land. Their presence illuminates the basic yearning for freedom, peace, and prosperity that has always been the spirit of the New World.

In this year when we as a people enjoy the fruits of economic growth and international cooperation, let us take time both to remember the sacrifices that have made this harvest possible and the needs of those who do not fully partake of its benefits. The wonder of our agricultural abundance must be recalled as the work of farmer who, under the best and worst of conditions, give their all to raise food upon the land. The gratitude that fills our being must be tempered with compassion for the needy. The blessings that are ours must be understood as the gift of a loving God Whose greatest gift is healing. Let us join then, with the psalmist of old:

O give thanks to the Lord, call on His name,

Make known His deeds among the peoples!

Sing to Him, sing praises to Him, Tell of all His wonderful works!

Glory in His holy name; Let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice!

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RONALD REAGAN, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim Thursday, November 24, 1988, as a National Day of thanksgiving, and I call upon the citizens of this great Nation to gather together in homes and places of worship on that day of thanks to affirm by their prayers and their gratitude the many blessings God has bestowed upon us.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this fourth day of August, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eighty-eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirteenth.

RONALD REAGAN