



PRESIDENTIAL THANKSGIVING PROCLAMATIONS
1980-1989: Jimmy Carter,
Ronald Reagan, George Bush

THANKSGIVING DAY, 1980

Proclamation 4803. November 13, 1980.

BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, A PROCLAMATION

The 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

Proclamation 4883. November 12, 1981

BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, A PROCLAMATION

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 understand 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

Proclamation 4979. September 27, 1982

BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, A PROCLAMATION

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

PROCLAMATION 5098 - THANKSGIVING DAY, 1983

September 15, 1983

BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, A PROCLAMATION

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

Proclamation 5269. October 19, 1984

BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, A PROCLAMATION

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

Proclamation 5412. November 15, 1985

BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, A PROCLAMATION

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

Proclamation 5551. October 13, 1986

BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, A PROCLAMATION

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

Proclamation 5687. July 28, 1987

BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, A PROCLAMATION

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

Proclamation 5844 - Thanksgiving Day, 1988

August 4, 1988

BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, A PROCLAMATION

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

Proclamation 6073 - THANKSGIVING DAY, 1989

November 17, 1989

BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, A PROCLAMATION

On Thanksgiving Day, we Americans pause as a Nation to give thanks for the freedom and prosperity with which we have been blessed by our Creator. Like the pilgrims who first settled in this land, we offer praise to God for His goodness and generosity and rededicate ourselves to lives of service and virtue in His sight.

This annual observance of Thanksgiving was a cherished American tradition even before our first President, George Washington, issued the first Presidential Thanksgiving proclamation in 1789. In his first Inaugural Address, President Washington observed that "No people can be bound to acknowledge and adore the Invisible Hand which conducts the affairs of men more than those of the United States." He noted that the American people - blessed with victory in their fight for Independence and with an abundance of crops in their fields - owed God "some return of pious gratitude." Later, in a confidential note to his close advisor, James Madison, he asked "should the sense of the Senate be taken on ... a day of Thanksgiving?" George Washington thus led the way to a Joint Resolution of Congress requesting the President to set aside "a day of public Thanksgiving and Prayer, to be observed by acknowledging with grateful hearts the many and signal Favors of Almighty God."

Through the eloquent words of President Washington's initial Thanksgiving proclamation - the first under the Constitution - we are reminded of our dependence upon our Heavenly Father and of the debt of gratitude we owe to Him. "It is the Duty of all Nations," wrote Washington, "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."

President Washington asked that on Thanksgiving Day the people of the United States:

unite in rendering unto [God] our sincere and humble Thanks for his kind Care and Protection of the People of this Country previous to their becoming a Nation; for ... the great degree of Tranquility, Union and Plenty which we have since enjoyed; for ... the civil and religious Liberty with which we are blessed, and ... for all the great and various Favors which he hath been pleased to confer upon us.

Two hundred years later, we continue to offer thanks to the Almighty - not only for the material prosperity that our Nation enjoys, but also for the blessings of peace and freedom. Our Nation has no greater treasures than these.

As we pause to acknowledge the kindnesses God has shown to us - and, indeed, His gift of life itself - we do so in a spirit of humility as well as gratitude. When the United States was still a fledgling democracy, President Washington asked the American people to unite in prayer to the "great Lord and ruler of Nations," in order to:

beseech him to pardon our national and other Transgressions; to enable us all, whether in public or private Stations, to perform our several and relative Duties properly and punctually; to render our national Government a blessing to all the People, by constantly being a Government of wise, just and constitutional Laws, discreetly and faithfully executed and obeyed; to protect and guide all Sovereigns and Nations ... and to bless them with good Government, peace and Concord.

Today, we, too, pause on Thanksgiving with humble and contrite hearts, mindful of God's mercy and forgiveness and of our continued need for His protection and guidance. On this day, we also remember that one gives praise to God not only through prayers of thanksgiving, but also through obedience to His commandments and service to others, especially those less fortunate than ourselves.

While some Presidents followed Washington's precedent, and some State Governors did as well, President Lincoln - despite being faced with the dark specter of civil war - renewed the practice of proclaiming a national day of Thanksgiving. This venerable tradition has been sustained by every President since then, in times of strife as well as times of peace and prosperity.

Today, we continue to offer thanks and praise to our Creator, that "Great Author of every public and private good," for the many blessings He has bestowed upon us. In so doing, we recall the timeless words of the 100th Psalm:

Serve the Lord with gladness: come before His presence with singing.

Know ye that the Lord He is God: it is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture.

Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise: be thankful unto Him, and bless His name.

For the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting; and His truth endureth to all generations.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GEORGE BUSH, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim Thursday, November 23, 1989, as a National Day of Thanksgiving, and I call upon the American people 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 and our Nation. IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this seventeenth day of November, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eighty-nine, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and fourteenth.

GEORGE BUSH