

Giving Thanks for and During Thanksgiving

“In everything give thanks,” for this is the will of God for our lives. (I Thessalonians 5:18.) Any skeptic would likely ask, “In everything?” At least that was my first reaction, thinking of quite a few things for which I wasn’t exactly thankful. But I tuned in to Fr. Cedric again the Sunday before Thanksgiving and he was listing things for which all should be thankful.

I hadn’t gotten very far into my list when I came to yesterday’s funeral for my brother-in-law, Roe Walker, who after ten years of brave battle, had finally succumbed to Cancer. He suffered so much in the last few days of his life that several of us in the family prayed for God to take Roe home.

Very soon thereafter, Roe entered that promised Paradise God’s Word says will make all sufferers completely forget past agonies: (“For Our light affliction, which is just for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of Glory,...for the things that are seen are passing away, but the things that are not seen are eternal.” (II Cor 4: 17, 18.) Simply put, Heaven is so glorious, that the wonder of it will make us entirely forget any and all past sufferings.

So here’s the irony: we despaired at the suffering Roe had endured, but now, we who believe God’s word, are joyously thankful that he is with Jesus, for as Paul says, “To be absent from the body is to be ‘present with the Lord.’” (II Tim (4,8.)

There’s a secret in being thankful that cynics never understand: Giving thanks opens the door to God’s amazing Grace. In fact, thankfulness may just be the most potent weapon a Christian can use to fight the fear, confusion and deception, (lies), Satan uses to steal our hope.

I can think of a number of times when I found myself in a mess, and remembering the promise, simply began to give thanks. Once, I was hopelessly stuck

by a duck slough with a flat tire I couldn't change because my little short tire wrench wouldn't budge the lug nuts.

Within ten minutes of my giving thanks, a pickup full of hunters pulled up and the driver had a king-sized tire wrench that removed those over-tightened lug nuts with ease. I put on my spare and thankfully drove home, convinced that the Lord is true to His word.

The celebration of Roe Walker's life "summoned up remembrance of things past" that helped me realize what a treasure Roe Walker was. He personally taught me one really valuable lesson:

At age 18, he rounded up a semi to help us move from Pillager Mn. to Wahpeton when I got the teaching position at Science. It really amazed me that he would go out of his way to help his sister Audrey and me move that mountain of stuff. But he did it heartily with no complaints.

An even greater lesson came when he became disappointed in my using so much of my free time to fish and hunt, rather than *being there* to lighten Audrey's load. She was raising two small kids while working full time at Wahpeton National Bank.

I invited Roe to come down to our farm in Fairmount to hunt pheasants with me one weekend, and he *exploded* a young rooster that flew only a few feet in front of me. The look on Roe's face told me that wasn't an accident. I'd seen that look other times when I was heading out to pursue one of my outdoor obsessions. That look said, "Why in the hell aren't you ever around when Audrey needs some help?"

It's taken me a long time to learn that self satisfaction "sucks," compared to helping others. Roe understood that instinctively, and people still marvel at his great readiness to help them when they needed help.

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