NOVEMBER 24, 1946

I greet you all, noble countrymen and countrywomen, with the words: Let Jesus Christ be praised.

 “Dzień Dziękczynienia” or “Thanksgiving Day” is a major American Holiday. It had its beginnings in Massachusetts in the year 1621, 225 years ago. This holiday had its beginning with the Pilgrims, a group of English Protestants who did not want to recognize the authority of the Anglican Church because of its connection with civil government and an English monarch. This group created a self-governing church, not tied to the government. In the eyes of the government they were revolutionaries and rebels. The government called for their expulsion. The English government ordered their expulsion by shipping them out into foreign shores of this country on the ship, “Mayflower.” Here in Massachusetts they found difficulties and harsh living but a freedom to believe as they wished. A harsh winter which the Puritans spent in “block houses” took some of their lives. Illnesses took a good part of their lives as well. Hunger from lack of food and almost devastated the whole group. Only 55 among them four women lived to spring. The future held the possible extinction of the whole group. Corn, which was sown in the fields in the forest, did not survive. Another ship which contained 35 new expatriates arrived with no flour or other foodstuffs. Indians were a threat and food was not forthcoming; they suffered eating half portions. They ate berries and roots. Despite these depravations they did not lose heart or faith in Providence. They spend days in hard labor building houses and clearing the forest. They fished and picked the corn left by the Indians. They dug graves and buried the dead at night. There are some historical writings that describe the creation of the town called Plymouth. One of them, Edward Winslow wrote: “I saw people falling from hunger, illness, and weakness. Berries and fish and a glass of water helped them survive through the Providence of God and their faith in the Creator. Another writer named Brewster who had before him some clams and a glass of cold water stood at the table and publicly thanked God for “the plenitude of gifts from the sea and the treasures of sustenance from the sands of the beach.” The month of November was ending and with it ended the hunger of the Colonists. Fishermen had good fortune. They dried the fish and stored them. The hunters caught several bears, shot some wild turkeys; harvested corn and had provisions for the winter months. The Colonists unanimously dedicated one day to give thanks to God for the fruits of the earth, for God’s mercy upon them and delivered them from starvation. They gave us the first Thanksgiving Day, not knowing that the future will make this a traditional American Holiday.

We Give Thanks for the Providence of God

 I wouldn’t want you, from the above introduction to have the impression that the thought of celebrating for the first time, a “Thanksgiving Day”, the Colonists, generally known as Pilgrims, after many troubles, came to a secure time and were secure and with no fear. It was just the opposite. Wherever they went and whenever they congregated, they carried with them a musket or rifle. Normally they carried it at their side uncertain that at any time a wild animal or a group of Indians would come upon them. They lived armed with uncertainty in their hearts and fear in their souls. What they had just went through when disembarking was the most difficult year of their existence; they were starving, sick, and full of fear. They counted the tombstones in the cemetery. There wasn’t even one person in their group who had gone through such troublesome times. Nevertheless, they set aside a day of thanks for their blessings despite what they had gone through and they believed firmly that some power of God would bring them to a normal and happy day and happiness in the afterlife on earth. They believed that under the grace of God they would survive and reach their reward.

 They left their faith for us in protective care with hope for personal future and assuring personal peace and happiness and so assuring national integrity.

 For the past twenty five years that faith in providential care, or hope for the care for the losses our nation has suffered and weakened the ordeal. As long as the first settlers were forced to fight for survival in the nation and in an empty land, untouched by humanity and seeking the Providence of God. They believed in the wise providence which felt mercy for them. They would survive through that belief in the Protector. And it happened in reality. No nation in the history of the world would in such a short space of time made progress as swiftly as did America. Our needs, our requirements have enabled the power to meet those needs through inventiveness. Americans were recognized first in commerce. They were credited with discovery and exploration. They possess sharp intellect and knowledge of commerce. They need to understand that the facts that drive them to succeed. They see how the Americans boldly and with certainty harnessed nature and the air as their servants. They changed the direction of rivers and diverted them through steep valleys. They established communication with far away countries in the far corners of the world. They put telegraphic cable on the bottom of the ocean in order not to be isolationists from their countries of birth in order to break the bonds of hatred. Fire was no longer the privilege of the gods and fell into controlling hands of humans so they used fire for domestic uses, for cooking, for heating their homes.

 Let us believe in God’s Providence and wonder at the wisdom of the Providence. It is only then it will permit humanity to extract from Nature the unknown when mankind is ready for its discovery and use. The marine compass was discovered when shipbuilding came into being to battle storms at sea. Not infrequently nature held its secrets even when they were known to be there. It took seven years before man controlled electricity and brought it forth for the service of man. Look at the uses electricity continues to bring for man’s use.

 Today, the entire world is in turmoil and lacks peace. People are feverishly preoccupied with their activities with external peace, with high interest, seemingly as usual and in reality some kind of uncertainty and apprehension grips them, as well as disquiet of heart and soul. We are faced with the discovery of great energy which could erase mankind from this earth in the blink of an eye. Fruitlessly we try to get rid of this destructive vision whose reality could toss us into eternity. It stands before us like the rock of Gibraltar. Fruitlessly we want to forget about it. It is part of our living now. There is no cure, no prescription available. Are there any chances that we may return to normalcy? There is after all a certain medication for this ill – certain and effective this medication li nothing else faith – the faith akin to that of our Colonists – faith in the wise and enduring Providence of God. Humanity plods ahead from a temporal to an eternal Eden on life’s road. Who knows whether it has not crossed the thresh-hold between the jungle and the inheritance field? Who knows how much of the road mankind has already passed and the distance yet to go? Humanity has been already threatened. Despite cautions, despite fears, mankind marches on, not always with measured step not always with even tempo. Whoever knows history is not anxious. It pays no attention to people without faith or with weak faith. The current times do not for-bode the end of the world. God’s Providence takes care of us and leads us through paths and roads less known and less understood. These paths are very narrow and the roads full of danger. Despite this, we forge forward according to eternal plans carved by the Divine Architect. We continue on the road despite uncertainty, caution and fear. If the end of the world were to come today, it would mean that there never was such a divine plan and the hope and faith of past ages were a dream and that humanity was making no sense.

 Taking a look at the manifestations of the current times is nothing but to become a cynic calling Providence to task and getting rid of the wisdom of God’s plans. That view warns of the ruin of people’s souls and predicts ill health and an early aging and death. Let us celebrate this year’s Thanksgiving Day in the spirit of the American pioneers and speak with them with deep faith: “O God! I ask not to see the distant scenes of life. It suffices for me to walk step by step in faith and hope!”

 This year especially at Thanksgiving Day we “ought to praise God, bless his Name for his merciful love” since the Sun of Goodness dissipated the dark clouds which had blown over our count ry. I am not hasty as to say that all our troubles have come to an end, that we solved all our problems or that all will be ok in the future. Only an idiot would dare to claim something like that in the presence of the many strikes, general dissatisfaction and colossal national debt; only an optimist, who always sees everything through rose colored glasses and who sees every life event, is deaf to the loud interferences to life and blind to the red lights indicating peril and calling for carefulness. Despite this, on Thanksgiving Day we ought to turn our minds to that facet of our lives namely, the good pay-off of the worker and the farmer; for the success in our commerce, the protection of the worker from unemployment and illness; and help for him in his old age etc. And from the side of the one hundred and thirty-five million Americans who are truly blessed, we should be thankful for the multiple blessings we have been gifted with. “Americans, you are not only happy but truly blessed. This Thanksgiving Day let us be thankful to the Providence of God who has been so good to us!”

 All things being equal in our daily proceedings, let me be permitted to mention that despite our many problems, and troubles, our country in comparison with others stands in better circumstances in commerce, as far as the four freedoms are concerned. Is it possible to find others in similar situations, in Warsaw, Naples, London, Antwerp, Brussels, or Berlin? People live in the midst of piles of brick and stone, ruins, skeletons of burned out homes. They have the outlook of an underground animal. Frightened and miserable they plod on day after day. They look upon the future with resignation as an endless desert. Now consider the cities in our United States. Look into our homes. Look at our tables. Look into our refrigerators – dressers – closets.. Start in our cellars and end up in our attics. After this domestic journey do you not feel a response in your heart, in which dwells a deep thankfulness to the Giver of all the good we experience? Thank Providence for the gifts we have been given this Thanksgiving Day.

 I advise, however, that we keep from being too proud of our accomplishments and state of being without assigning all to God’s grace. Let us not assign all that we did and have solely to our ability and strength. Let us not demand a reward for what we see as our own abilities for they come from the almighty. George Washington wrote concerning our gratitude: “We ask God to keep us from bragging about our goodness”

 If God in his dealing with us gave us only as much as we deserved; if He removed his justice, mercy; if he looked are our faults, the breaking up of our family life, the many divorces; if God only weighed our shortcomings, our Nation would be in sad shape. This Thursday, our harvests, forests, farms, and cities remind us “Americans, give glory to Gods Providence and give this Providence due gratitude!”

I know only too well that there are many families in which suffering, sadness, deprivation, and sickness are guests. I know that in our land there are men, women and children with hurting hearts and despairing minds. There are people with hurting souls and bodies. Ask me my reaction to the question: “You expect me to thank God?! For what?!” That’s what a young gentleman writes from Philadelphia. He continues, “I don’t know what to do. I’m beside myself. Three months ago my wife died! A month later my child died. What do I have to live for?” In a letter from Chicago: “Five months after marrying, my husband got sick. He ended up paralyzed. He totally bed ridden. I have to take care of him as I would a child. I can’t comprehend why God is punishing me so severely. From Boston: “I am 81 years old. I live alone. My children left me because I didn’t want to sell the house and divide the money among them. One of my daughters cursed me and wished me terrible things. I don’t feel like living any more. From Brooklyn: “In Brooklyn: In April of this year, I married in Church. After two weeks of married life, my husband left me. He went to his mother. On leaving he said that he had it better with his mother than with me. Now I am neither a wife nor marriageable. My life is tangled and ruined.” These and other people, instead of counting the graces and blessings, ask the question with torn heart and soul: “What do I have to thank for?” There is one reason why such people should give thanks. “For what? You may ask in amazement. – To thank God for your life and that God is giving you the strength to bear these distresses, heavy troubles, and sufferings and persevere it all. In the darkest moments of our lives, when various difficulties and sufferings hit us like a hurricane, when it seems that we are sinking under the waves of doubt fear we need to hold on to the conviction that “we know that to those who love God, everything tends toward the good.

My personal plea on Thanksgiving Day will be that those who ask what they should be thankful to the Providence of God, that God has given them heroism, and a heroic Christian Spirit whose song is: “Who shall separate us **from the love of Christ**? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? [Romans 8:35](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+8:35&version=NIV) In all of this we will survive because God has loved us.”

A life of gratitude is a liberating life. It is a winning life. God is a God of triumphant victory. God is a God of Truth. So I could say with surety that we also will triumph if each day or our lives is a day of gratitude and that with a firm faith in Christ we will go through life with blessings as well as difficulties with joys as well with suffering. Let our motto be the words of the psalmist: “Give glory to God, give glory to the God of Gods for his mercy is everlasting.