

Ronald Reagan Presidential Library

Digital Library Collections

This is a PDF of a folder from our textual collections.

Collection: Correspondence, White House Office of:
Records, 1981-1989
Folder Title: Thanksgiving Day
Box: 85 (1988)

To see more digitized collections visit:

<https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/digitized-textual-material>

To see all Ronald Reagan Presidential Library Inventories, visit:

<https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/white-house-inventories>

Contact a reference archivist at: **reagan.library@nara.gov**

Citation Guidelines: <https://reaganlibrary.gov/archives/research-support/citation-guide>

National Archives Catalogue: <https://catalog.archives.gov/>

Last Updated: 05/22/2023



Thanksgiving Day, 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 farmers 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