

Thanksgiving
St. Angela

— Nov. 26, 1981

° (Penitential Rite: thanks to God, whose beauty and power is revealed in nature and whose providence is revealed in history)

Introduction

Happy to be here

Fr. Ed. Braxton

- I. Church has never had a particular feast of Thanksgiving -
 - a. we must always have a thankful disposition;
 - b. God has been so immeasurably good to us that we need Christ to say thanks for us eternally before the Father: Eucharist
 - c. believers have an innate consciousness that all we have is a gift from God

- II. And so we are profoundly grateful and we utter thanks on this day:
 1. for the leaders of the Church who have committed themselves to continue the good work that has begun in us;

 2. for our parents, relatives, teachers, friends, and all the holy men and women who shared their faith with us and nourished our relationship with God;

 3. for those who believed in us, supported and cared for us as we struggled to reach maturity and appreciate all that is meaningful and necessary for our journey;

 4. for the daily events which bring us closer to each other and to God: the moments of laughter and joy, and even the opportunities to share our tears and difficulties;

 5. for the gift of Jesus, the Christ, the Living Bread come down from heaven, for the Word of God, which, hopefully, is sown on the good soil of our hearts;

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6. For those among us who have been called to be numbered among the saints, for our memories of our dead remain a source of hope;

II. Specifics:

1. for this country, the bountiful gifts of nature, and the principles upon which we were founded, our Constitution and Bill of Rights, for that bed-rock conviction of every American: that the dignity of the human person demands life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness for ALL men and women, regardless of race, ethnic origin, class, sex, or religion. Even amid all our troubles, we thank God for this unshakeable belief in our country and the tensions of conscience it causes when we do not live up to what we believe;

2. for the poor --

every time we assist the poor, particularly when we do so at great sacrifice, our own possessions, our own materialism and consumerism, are less barriers between our selves and God and ourselves and each other -- for these possessions do not become gods, the molten calfs of our times; and we become ever more conscious of the dignity of every human person;

we must eradicate the inhumane conditions that keep people poor;
consciousness of our responsibility to help;

El Salvador

Poland

the near East and near West sides of Cleveland

Thanksgiving Day
November 22, 1983
The Church of St. Bridget
Los Angeles, California

Charles Dickens, that renowned English author, said that we are somewhat mixed-up here in America. He told an audience that instead of having one Thanksgiving Day each year we should have 364. "Use that one day just for complaining and griping," he said. Use the other 364 days to thank God each day for the many blessings he has showered upon you."

- a. he's right, but...
- b. human weakness: we need one day to focus on the idea of being grateful, so that we can be appreciative on the remaining 364 days;
- c. thus, in our history, tradition, and culture we have come to set aside a special day to thank the Lord.

I. The Art of Giving Thanks

A. An emotion, an indescribable and inestimable feeling deep down within our souls, that moves us to praise the Lord for all his gifts.

B. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name."

C. To offer thanks to God presumes that each of us has a prior conviction and disposition - that all that we are and all that we have comes from God and belongs to God. We cannot celebrate Thanksgiving Day as a Holy Day unless we are imbued with this attitude of trust and dependence upon God.

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I. The Art of Giving, cont.

D. Above all, we acknowledge that God, in Christ Jesus, through the power of his Spirit, is the Lord of my life and of all history. And so, the grounding reason we come together to praise the Lord for his blessings is because GOD IS GOD AND HE IS, ABOVE ALL ELSE, IS OUR BLESSING. WE THANK HIM, FIRST OF ALL, FOR HIMSELF. For, as the old Spiritual has it -- HE IS TALLER THAN THE MOUNTAINS, HE IS WIDER THAN THE OCEANS, HE IS DEEPER THAN THE DEPTHS, AND THERE IS NONE LIKE HIM!

II. Thanks for Other Gifts

Yes, we thank God for God, but all good gifts come from above, so we thank the Lord for ---

A. for our parents, relatives, friends, and all the good men and women who have shared their faith us and nourished our relationship with God;

B. for those who believed in us even when we didn't believe in ourselves, for those who supported us and cared for us, as we struggle to reach maturity and hold on to all that is meaningful and necessary for life's journey;

C. for daily events which bring us closer to each other and to God: the moments of laughter and joy and, yes, the opportunities to share our tears and tragedies;

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II. Thanks for Other Gifts, cont.

D. For the leaders of our Church and our country who have committed themselves to continue the good work that God has begun in us:

Pope John Paul II, the greatest moral leader of our day...
(he makes you proud to be a Catholic)

yes, for President Reagan - he has roused us from sleep!

for Father Norvel - "he's movin on up"!

for Father McKenna - he's takin' care of the flock!

for the staff, the choir, the various ministers in
this church --

they have committed themselves to continue the good work that God has begun in us.

E. For those from our parish family who have been called to be numbered among the saints, for the memories of our dead are a source of strength and hope.

III. Thanks for Other Gifts - beyond individual persons

A. For this country, the bountiful gifts of nature, and the principles upon which we are founded, our Constitution and Bill of Rights, for the bedrock conviction of every American: that the irresistible requirement of the dignity of every human person demands life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness for ALL men and women, regardless of race, ethnic origin, class, sex, or religion. Even amid all our troubles, we thank God for this unshakeable belief in our country and the tensions of conscience that occur when we do not live up to what we believe in;

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B. For our Black Culture, history, tradition...

Did you look at your Black history for the month of November --

1) Saint Martin de Porres

Edith Sampson, first Black Chicago municipal judge

the founding of the Knights of St. Peter Claver

Christal B. Faucet, first black women elected to state legislature

Benjamin Banneker, inventor and surveyor for Washington, D.C.

Booker T. Washington

Bill Russell, first black coach of a professional team

Sojourner Truth

the founding of the Sisters of the Holy Family

J.L. Love, patented the pencil sharpener

Bill Bojangles Robinson

Richard Wright

Shirley Chisholm

2) And let's not forget that the Congress of the United States has declared Martin L. King's birthday a national holiday -- we have so much for which to Thank God!!

III. Now, my friends, amid all of this for which we praise the Lord, I would be remiss as a minister of the truth of the Gospel if I did not single out at least one devastating disease for which on this Thanksgiving Day we should hang our heads in shame:

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I speak of the greatest sin of omission of our day: the neglect of the poor.

So many are our poor today that we no longer speak of street people; we now speak of street families.

More than 90% of the poor are elderly, disabled, children under 16, mothers of young children and underpaid workers, including some two million people who work full-time but earn less than poverty level wages.

Two out of three poor adults are women (we speak now of the feminization of poverty). 63% of Black, 63% of Hispanic, and 39% of White single mothers are poor.

One out of every three of our black brothers and sisters is poor, one out of every four is jobless. As a people, we still suffer from decades of racial hostility and discrimination. Relatively speaking, many of our people are still slaves.

My friends, let us not forget - to neglect and ignore the poor is to ignore and neglect Christ. The poor of this city, our country and the world shed the tears of Christ. Through them the wounds of Christ speak to us and to the world. The poor are ours -- know this, now -- not so much for what we can do for them. The poor are our own and their causes our gravest concerns, because in them we see the sacred humanity of the

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suffering Christ.

Thus, in a certain way of speaking, we thank God for the poor - for every time we assist the poor, particularly through works of justice and self-help (that is, helping the poor help themselves), our own possessions, our own materialism and consumerism, are less barriers between ourselves and God and ourselves and each other. Then, these possessions do not become the god we worship, the molten calfs of our time. When we offer our resources and talents and time in behalf of the poor, we become more conscious of the dignity of every human person. In short, there is no authentic Thanksgiving to God, where there is no authentic service and self-giving to suffering humanity; for in Christ, the poor are our brothers and sisters. How can we turn away from one of our own? Hear the words of the ancient Father of the Church, Saint Basil the Great:

The bread which you do not use
is the bread of the hungry.

The garment hanging in your wardrobe
is the garment of him who is naked.

The shoes that you do not wear
are the shoes of one who is barefoot.

The money you keep locked away
is the money of the poor.

The acts of charity you do not perform
are so many injustices you commit.

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My brothers and sisters, as we approach the Table of the Lord on this Thanksgiving Day, I am reminded of the words of another ancient Father, of our own race, from Africa. He says,

Believers come to know the Body of Christ,
if they do not neglect the Body of Christ.

I am also reminded of that vision for which Christ died and which was so beautifully expressed by the Black poet Langston Hughes:

I dream a world where man
no other will scorn,
Where love will bless the earth
And peace its paths adorn,
I dream a world where all
Will know sweet freedom's way,
Where greed no longer saps the soul
Nor avarice blights our day.
A world I dream where black or white,
Whatever race you be,
Will share the bounties of the earth
And every man is free,
Where wretchedness will hang its head,
And joy, like a pearly,
Attend the needs of all mankind,
Of such I dream --
Our world.

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Matthew 13: 23

But what was sown on good soil is the man who hears the message and takes it in. He it is who bears a yield of a hundred - or sixty - or thirty-fold.

II Corinthians 8

God can always multiply his favors among you so that you may always have enough of everything, and even a surplus for good works.

Genesis 1: 11

Let the earth bring forth vegetation: every kind of plant that bears seed and every kind of fruit tree on earth that bears fruit with its seed in it.

Dedicate yourself
to thankfulness -
colossians

Go home to your family and make it clear to
them how much it had in the way he done for
you. - maaa

THANKSGIVING IN CHICAGO

22 NOVEMBER 1984

Shout for
joy -
sing joyfully -
dinner -

MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS: HOW DELIGHTFUL IT IS FOR ME TO
BE WITH YOU TODAY TO CELEBRATE A DAY THAT IS SO RICH
IN TRADITION. MAY IT ALSO BE AS RICH IN GRATITUDE
AS IT IS IN GOOD TIME MEMORIES.

THANKSGIVING ^{Day} IS A ^{Joyful} ~~HAPPY~~ TIME--A TIME OF HAPPY
MEMORIES, A TIME TO FORGET TROUBLES; ~~IF YOU HAVE THEM.~~
A RICH BANQUET OF TURKEY AND STUFFING, GRAVY AND BISQUITS,
PIES AND CAKES, ^{olives, collars greens + chickens -} AND A HOUSE FILLED WITH KIDS AND
GRANDPARENTS, OLD FRIENDS AND FOOTBALL GAMES--THIS IS
ENOUGH TO MAKE ANYONE FORGET TROUBLES. THIS IS WHAT
WE REMEMBER ABOUT THANKSGIVING, AND WHAT WE LOOK FORWARD
TO, YEAR AFTER YEAR.

A LOT TO EAT AND FRIENDS AND GOOD TIMES: THIS CAN
MAKE MOST TROUBLES DISAPPEAR, IF THEY ARE SMALL--AND EVEN
MAKE BIG TROUBLES SEEM NOT QUITE SO BAD--ON A FEASTING
JOYFUL DAY.

IT IS GOOD THAT WE ARE HAPPY TODAY--WHO WANTS TO BE
SAD ANYWAY? BUT OFTEN WE CONFUSE REAL HAPPINESS OR
CONTENTMENT--WITH JUST FEELING GOOD. FEELING GOOD IS
A PASSING EXPERIENCE. IN OUR WORLD THAT LIKES THINGS
EASY--FEELING GOOD IS EASY: YOU CAN GET IT OUT OF A BOTTLE
OR A CAN, ^{- OR A NEEDLE} BUT REAL CONTENTMENT IS SOMETHING ELSE--IT
IS NOT A PASSING FEELING, BUT A STATE OF MIND THAT COMES
TO A HEART THAT RESTS SECURE IN THE FREEDOM OF GOD.

FEELING GOOD IS SOMETHING THAT YOU DO FOR YOURSELF
OR JUST LET HAPPEN. BUT PEACE OF MIND COMES FROM SOMETHING

ELSE. YOU CAN'T HAVE IT, YOU CAN'T DO IT ALONE. YOU FEEL GOOD BY YOURSELF--BUT YOU ATTAIN TRUE PEACE OF MIND IN A LIFE LIVED WITH OTHERS, FOR OTHERS. ~~FOR~~ TO HAVE THAT TRUE CONTENTMENT, WE KNOW THAT WE HAVE TO DO GOOD, NOT JUST FEEL GOOD. DOING GOOD REQUIRES HELP, DIRECTION. WE CANNOT DO GOOD ALONE. WE NEED OTHERS BECAUSE WE DO GOOD--ONLY FOR OTHERS, WITH OTHERS.

FEELING GOOD ALSO MEANS NEEDING NOTHING, AND NEEDING NOBODY. BUT DOING GOOD MEANS THAT WE HAVE TO REALIZE THAT WE ARE THE NEEDIEST OF ALL, THAT WE NEED ALL THE HELP THAT WE CAN GET. AND GRATITUDE HAS TO DO WITH RECOGNIZING THAT WE NEED, THAT WE ARE A NEEDY PEOPLE. SAD TO SAY, BUT PLENTY HAS A WAY OF DULLING THE EDGE OF THAT SENSE OF BEING "NEEDY"--AND WE FORGET TO GIVE THANKS, BECAUSE WE DON'T LIKE TO BE REMINDED THAT WE ARE "NEEDY."

MAYBE THAT IS WHAT AN EDITORIAL WRITER, DARRELL HOLLAND, MEANT WHEN HE WROTE IN THE CLEVELAND PLAIN DEALER (SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 1974) THAT THANKSGIVING TODAY SEEMED TO HAVE LITTLE TO DO WITH GIVING THANKS: "THANKSGIVING NOW IS OFTEN A TIME FOR FEASTING, NOT THANKFULNESS. WE MAY SIMPLY HAVE TOO MUCH OF THE EARTH'S ABUNDANCE TO TAKE SERIOUSLY . . . THE MEANING OF GRATITUDE."

IT IS REALLY STRANGE: THE MORE WE HAVE, THE HARDER IT SEEMS TO GIVE THANKS. LOTS OF POSSESSIONS, FINE HOUSES AND CARS, GOOD OPPORTUNITIES FOR EDUCATION, SECURE JOBS AND PLENTY OF MONEY--ALL THAT WE DREAMT WOULD BRING US HAPPINESS WHEN WE HAD LITTLE OR NOTHING, NOW WHEN WE HAVE

ABUNDANCE--SEEM TO BECOME AN ADDICTIVE HABIT: THE HEART IS DULLED, WE ARE MORE INSECURE THAN EVER, MORE LIKELY TO BE UNGRATEFUL AND EVER MORE GREEDY FOR MORE.

PEOPLE WHO ARE GREEDY ARE AFRAID TO BE NEEDY, AND EVEN WHEN THEY ARE POOR THEY ARE ASHAMED AND AFRAID--NOT BECAUSE THEY HAVE LITTLE, BUT BECAUSE THEY ARE NEEDY. ~~AND~~ THIS IS WHY IT IS SO DIFFICULT TO GIVE THANKS--BECAUSE THANKSGIVING--WHETHER ONE HAS LITTLE OR MUCH--IMPLIES A CONSTANT RECOGNITION OF FUNDAMENTAL NEEDINESS. *"It's me, - standing in the need of prayer"*

SO--NOT ONLY DO WE EASILY CONFUSE "FEELING GOOD" WITH BEING GOOD, DOING GOOD AND BEING GRATEFUL, BUT ALSO WE GET "BEING POOR" AND "BEING NEEDY" MIXED UP. WE GET ANGRY AND RESENTFUL --NOT BECAUSE WE HAVE TOO LITTLE OF THIS WORLD'S GOODS--BUT BECAUSE WE ARE AFRAID OF BEING NEEDY: WE DON'T LIKE TO BE DEPENDENT UPON ANYONE, EVEN GOD. WE LIKE TO "FEEL GOOD" ALL THE TIME, AND NEED NOBODY AND NOTHING AT ALL. SO HOW CAN WE GIVE THANKS--WHEN EVEN IF WE HAVE MUCH, WE RESENT THE FACT THAT WE DON'T HAVE MORE, AND NO MATTER HOW MUCH WE HAVE, IT IS NEVER ENOUGH. FOR WHAT WE WANT, IS TO FEEL GOOD AND NEVER HAVE ANY NEED AT ALL.

THE STRANGE THING IS: YOU HAVE TO BE NEEDY IN ORDER TO GIVE THANKS. AND WE CANNOT GIVE THANKS UNLESS WE ARE WILLING TO DISCOVER THE DEPTHS OF OUR NEEDINESS. FOR WHAT CAN WE GIVE THANKS FOR--IF IT IS NOT A GIFT. AND WHAT IS A GIFT--IF IT IS NOT SOME BLESSING THAT WE RECEIVE FROM ANOTHER. AND WHAT DO WE RECEIVE, EXCEPT THAT WHICH WE DO NOT HAVE, THAT

THANKSGIVING - 4

WHICH WE LONG FOR, THAT ANOTHER PROVIDES AND WHAT WE NEED.

ST. PAUL ASKS: "WHAT DO YOU HAVE THAT YOU DID NOT RECEIVE? BUT IF YOU DID RECEIVE IT, WHY DO YOU BOAST AS IF YOU HAD NOT RECEIVED IT? (I COR. 4: 7)." THE GREAT TRAGEDY OF BEING UNGRATEFUL IS THAT WE LOSE THE VERY THINGS THAT WE TAKE FOR GRANTED. WE NO LONGER TREASURE OUR BLESSINGS BECAUSE WE ARE SO DISSATISFIED AND AVARICIOUS FOR MORE, ALWAYS MORE.

AND WHEN WE CANNOT GIVE THANKS--HOW CAN WE SHARE? WHEN WE DO NOT RECOGNIZE THAT WE HAVE RECEIVED ANYTHING--HOW CAN WE EVEN THINK WE HAVE ANYTHING TO GIVE?

IT IS NOT ACCIDENTAL THAT WE BLACK BISHOPS BEGAN OUR PASTORAL LETTER, "WHAT WE HAVE SEEN AND HEARD," WHICH WE ADDRESSED TO YOU THIS YEAR ON THE FEAST OF ST. PETER CLAVER, WITH A DEEP EXPRESSION OF GRATITUDE. ~~FOR~~ THE HEART OF OUR MESSAGE TO YOU, IS A CALL TO RECOGNIZE THE TREASURE OF ^{Black people's} YOUR GIFTEDNESS TO THE CHURCH. ^{We} YOU HAVE SO VERY MUCH TO GIVE FROM THE ABUNDANCE OF OUR ^{AFRICAN-} ~~AERO-~~ AMERICAN CULTURE AND TRADITION OF RELIGIOUS FAITH. THIS ABUNDANCE FIRST OF ALL MUST BE HUMBLY AND GRATEFULLY RECOGNIZED AS A GIFT.

EVERY ONE OF THE RICH TREASURES OF BLACK CULTURE AND VALUES THAT WE HAVE TO SHARE ARE GIFTS OF GOD THAT HAVE COME TO US FROM GOD IN OUR GREATEST AND DEEPEST NEED. FOR EXAMPLE, THE RICH LOVE OF THE SCRIPTURES, OUR PEOPLE'S KNOWLEDGE THAT "THE BIBLE STORY IS OUR STORY; THE BIBLE PROMISE IS OUR HOPE" IS GOD'S GIFT TO OUR NEED. FOR

"THE BIBLE HAS SUNK DEEP INTO OUR TRADITION; AND THE GOOD NEWS OF THE GOSPEL HAS BEEN ENMESHED IN OUR PAST OF OPPRESSION AND PAIN." ["WHAT WE HAVE SEEN....P. 5] OUR LOVE OF FREEDOM IS A GIFT OF GOD THAT WAS BORN IN OUR DEEP KNOWLEDGE OF ITS LOSS AND ITS LACK. WE WHO KNEW HATRED AND REJECTION, AND THE HUMILIATION OF EXPERIENCING THE ELEVATION OF ONE HUMAN BEING AT THE COST OF THE DEGRADATION OF ANOTHER--RECEIVE FROM GOD THE GIFT OF RECONCILIATION. WE KNOW IN OUR HEARTS THAT WE MUST HUNGER FOR PEACE, AND WE HAVE A GIFT FOR KNOWING THAT TRUE PEACE CAN BE ATTAINED ONLY IF WE WORK FOR JUSTICE AND EQUALITY FOR ALL--RICH AND POOR, YOUNG AND OLD, BLACK AND WHITE, MALE AND FEMALE--ALL, ALL EQUAL CHILDREN OF ONE FATHER, CALLED TO BE ONE. *It's me - standing in the need of prayer Thank you, Lord -*

WE KNOW OUR NEEDS--THAT MATERIAL GAINS ARE NOT ENOUGH TO SATISFY THE HUMAN HEART, AND SO WE BLACK PEOPLE HAVE A GIFT FROM GOD TO BE A SPIRITUAL PEOPLE, WITH TREASURES NOT OF SILVER AND GOLD, MILITARY MIGHT OR POLITICAL FORCE-- BUT WITH TREASURES OF THE HEART: CONTEMPLATION, LOVE OF FAMILY AND COMMUNITY, PROFOUND REVERENCE AND FELLOWSHIP WITH ALL LIFE, FROM THE UNBORN TO THE LONG BORN.

Black folks
WE HAVE SO MUCH TO GIVE, MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS--BUT WE WILL NEVER BE ABLE TO SHARE THE TREASURE THAT WE ARE, UNLESS WE BECOME AWARE AGAIN OF HOW VERY MUCH WE HAVE RECEIVED. AND THAT WE CANNOT KNOW OR OWN, UNLESS WE SEE HOW VERY MUCH WE NEED. INDEED, ALL THAT WE ARE, ALL THAT WE HAVE--IS GIFT FROM GOD, AND SO WE MUST NEVER BE ASHAMED

TO BE A PEOPLE OF DEEPEST NEED,

WE NEED GOD FOR EVERY BREATH, WE NEED ONE ANOTHER FOR EVERY EXPRESSION THAT WE MAKE OF LOVE, EVERY LONGING FOR JUSTICE, EVERY HUNGER FOR PEACE. LET US NOT BE ASHAMED THAT WE NEED. WITH ST. PAUL WE CAN SAY, "MOST GLADLY THEREFORE WILL I BOAST OF MY WEAKNESS, BECAUSE WHEN I AM WEAK, THEN I AM STRONG." [2 COR. 12: 9-10].

WE CELEBRATE THANKSGIVING TODAY, NOT TO JUSTIFY EXCESSES OF GLUTTONY TO MAKE OUR TROUBLES DISAPPEAR FOR A LITTLE WHILE, TO FORGET OUR ANGRY WANTS AND RESENTFUL FEARS. BUT WE HUMBLE OURSELVES IN GRATEFUL RECOGNITION OF ALL OUR NEEDS, AND WE ARE NOT AFRAID TO BE A SIMPLE AND A HUMBLE FOLK WHO KNOW WE NEED OUR GOD AND ONE ANOTHER. AND IN THE GENTLE LIGHT OF OUR NEEDS WE SEE THE TREASURE OF OUR FATHER'S CONSTANT CARE, PROVIDING FROM THE UNBOUNDED STORE OF HIS MERCY, ENDLESS GIFTS TO WARM OUR HEARTS AND LIGHT THE WORLD FOR MANY A MILE.

*Now, O Lord, we come to your TABLE -
 Stand in the need of prayer. You satisfy
 the hungry heart with gifts of finest wheat.
 Come give to me, O Loving Lord, the Bread
 of Life to eat.*

SAINT LEO CHURCH
THANKSGIVING 1985

Is. 63: 7-9
Col. 3: 12-17
LUKE 17: 11-19

MY DEAR BROTHERS AND SISTERS: THANKSGIVING DAY IS TIME FOR FAMILY AND FRIENDS. IT IS NO TIME TO BE ALONE OR AMONG STRANGERS. ~~AND~~ THIS DAY, PERHAPS MORE THAN ANY OTHER DAY THAT WE CELEBRATE, IS A SPECIAL TIME FOR OLD FOLKS. FOR THANKSGIVING DAY IS A TIME FOR MEMORIES.

OLD FOLKS DAY--BECAUSE YOU HAVE TO HAVE A FEW YEARS ON YOU TO HAVE MEMORIES TO REMEMBER. FAMILY DAY--BECAUSE MEMORIES ARE JUST A BORING LOT OF OLD STORIES UNLESS THEY ARE TOLD--AND SAVORED--AMONG THOSE WHO WILL REALLY LOVE THE STORYTELLER AS WELL AS THE TALE, AND UNDERSTAND THEM BOTH.

MEMORY THEN REQUIRES TWO KINDS OF PEOPLE: THOSE OLD ENOUGH TO SHARE A TALE OF THE PAST, AND THOSE WITH HEARTS BIG ENOUGH TO UNDERSTAND AND LOVE BOTH THOSE WHO REMEMBER AND THE STORIES THAT THEY TELL.

THAT IS WHY THANKSGIVING IS FOR FAMILY/AND WHY MEMORIES ARE FOR THANKSGIVING.

(X) THE SCRIPTURES TODAY ARE FULL OF MEMORIES. THE PROPHET ISAIAH RECALLS THE GLORIOUS DEEDS OF THE LORD IN THE FIRST READING. HE REMINDS US THAT THE LORD HAS INDEED BEEN GOOD TO US BECAUSE WE ARE HIS FAMILY, HIS FOLKS. HE HAS REDEEMED US OUT OF LOVE AND PITY WHEN WE WERE NOT ABLE TO CARE FOR OURSELVES--ALL BECAUSE WE ARE A PEOPLE THAT HE CHOOSES AND CALLS HIS OWN.

REMEMBER THAT YOU ARE GOD'S SPECIAL PEOPLE, HIS CHOSEN ONES, THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS TELLS US. THE MEMORY OF WHAT GOD HAS DONE FOR US BRINGS OUR PAST BACK TO US, FRESH AND ALIVE, AS IF RAISED FROM THE DEAD. AND WHEN OUR MEMORY IS FILLED WITH GRATEFUL LOVE FOR GOD, THEN WE TRULY COME TO SEE WHAT KIND OF PEOPLE WE ARE, AND WHAT WE HAVE BEEN CALLED TO BE.

FORGIVE AS THE LORD HAS FORGIVEN YOU--THE EPISTLE SAYS. PUT ON LOVE, WHICH IS THE VERY BOND, THE VERY POWERFUL BINDING FORCE OF GOD HIMSELF WHICH CALLS US ALL INTO ONE, IN PERFECT PEACE WITH ONE ANOTHER AND WITH THE ONE WHO HAS SPENT SO MUCH FOR US, CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD. IT IS THE MEMORY OF CHRIST'S WORD IN OUR HEARTS AND IN OUR MINDS, WHICH IS THE VERY SOURCE OF THE RICH WISDOM WHICH BRINGS US SUCH ABUNDANT LIFE AND THE BLESSINGS OF SUCH PEACE.

OUR THIRD READING FROM THE GOSPEL OF SAINT LUKE-- TELLS US A DIFFERENT TALE. TEN MEN WANDER IN SEARCH OF MERCY. WE DON'T KNOW MUCH ABOUT THEM, EXCEPT THAT THEY WERE LEPERS, AND THEY WERE TEN. TEN IS A SPECIAL NUMBER IN ISRAEL, BECAUSE IT MARKS THE OFFICIAL NUMBER FOR A CONGREGATION, A REQUIRED MINIMUM NUMBER OF MALES NEEDED FOR OFFICIAL PUBLIC WORSHIP OF GOD. TEN IS ~~SORT OF A~~ ^{Like a symbol} CHURCH. TEN COUNTS FOR ALL OF US.

NOW THESE TEN WERE LEPERS, RAISING THEIR VOICES TO THE LORD, CALLING FOR MERCY. THEY HAVE THE POWER OF TRADITION ON THEIR SIDE, AND THEY SPEAK WITH ALL THE POWER OF GOD'S CHOSEN PEOPLE. THEY HEAR THE WORD OF CHRIST TO OBEY THE ANCIENT WORD OF GOD IN THE SCRIPTURES, THAT THEY GO AND

SHOW THEMSELVES TO THE PRIESTS. ~~AND~~ SO, THEY SET OUT TO PERFORM THE REQUIRED WORK OF THE LAW THAT GOD HAD GIVEN TO MOSES. ~~AND SO~~ IT DOES NOT SURPRISE THEM THAT THEY ARE HEALED.

⑦ ONLY ONE IS CAPABLE OF THANKS, BECAUSE ONLY ONE OF THEM IS CAPABLE OF REALLY REMEMBERING, REALLY CALLING TO MIND THE MERCIES OF GOD. THIS MAN IS AN OUTCAST, A FORIEGNER, DESPISED BY THE PEOPLE, A SAMARITAN. HE IS SO AWARE THAT HE IS LITTLE AND POOR AND HAS NO CALL AT ALL UPON THE LORD, AND NO RIGHT TO EXPECT SPECIAL TREATMENT, THAT HE IS SO VERY MINDFUL THAT EVERYTHING IS SPECIAL, EVERY MOMENT FILLED WITH GRACE, AND GIFT THAT CALLS FOR THANKS AND PRAISE. THE OUTCAST HEALED AND MADE WHOLE REMEMBERS MERCY, AND SO HE COMES BACK, SEARCHING FOR JESUS, CRYING OUT PRAISES TO GOD IN A LOUD VOICE. HE IS NOT AFRAID TO BE REMEMBERED AS A FORMER-LEPER, AN EX-OUTCAST: HE JOYOUSLY AND HUMBLY ACKNOWLEDGES HIS ROOTS, AND THROWS HIMSELF ON HIS FACE BEFORE JESUS, OVERCOME WITH ADORING LOVE AND GRATITUDE.

THIS LITTLE MAN--EX-LEPER AND OUTCAST--ONLY RECEIVES WHAT MOST OF US HAVE ALWAYS HAD, AND SO EASILY TAKE FOR GRANTED--AND IS OVERCOME WITH GRATEFUL LOVE, BECAUSE HE IS MINDFUL OF HIS ROOTS, MINDFUL OF GOD'S SPECIAL FAVOR TO EVEN THE LEAST OF HIS CHILDREN. HE IS PROUD TO BE THE LEAST, FOR ONLY IN HIS LITTLENESS CAN HE EXULT IN THE GREATNESS OF THE GIFT. IT IS ONLY THE POOR WHO CAN BE FILLED WITH GOOD THINGS--WHILE THE RICH TURN EMPTY AWAY.

TODAY, MOST OF US WILL GO HOME TO WARM HOUSES, MANY LOVING FRIENDS, AND LOTS OF AUNTS AND UNCLES, GRANDPARENTS, MOMS AND DADS, LOVED ONES WHO LOVE US IN RETURN. WE WILL HAVE OUR JOYFUL MEMORIES OF THE ABUNDANCE OF OUR LIVES. BUT IT WOULD BE GOOD IF WE LET A SAMARITAN, A STRANGER AND AN OUTCAST TEACH US, REMIND US WHO WE REALLY ARE, HOW DEEPLY WE STAND IN NEED, AND HOW GREAT ARE THE MERCIES OF OUR GOD.

A SAMARITAN IS ALWAYS A BLESSING--AND THOUGH WE HAVE ALREADY HAD A GOSPEL, I WOULD LIKE TODAY TO GIVE A SECOND HELPING, SOME GOOD NEWS FROM A MODERN LEPER AND SAMARITAN NAMED MARK. MARK IS A YOUNG RECOVERING ALCOHOLIC WHO UNTIL RECENTLY WAS LIVING AT MATT TALBOT INN, A REHABILITATION HOME FOR POOR ALCOHOLIC MEN OF THE STREET, FOUNDED BY THE LATE FATHER BERARD SCARBOROUGH, A HOLY FRANCISCAN PRIEST WHOM MANY CLEVELANDERS REMEMBER WITH MUCH FONDNESS.

THE SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR AT MATT TALBOT A COUPLE OF WEEKS AGO DROVE MARK BACK TO PITTSBURGH TO A COURT HEARING, WHERE MARK FACED THE POSSIBILITY OF A SEVERE SENTENCE FOR SOME BAD THINGS HE WAS CONVICTED OF DOING WHILE HE WAS STILL DRINKING. THERE WERE AMENDS TO BE MADE TO SOCIETY AND THE JUDGE SENTENCED MARK TO A YEAR IN THE PENITENTIARY. BROTHER THEO HAD TO LEAVE HIS FRIEND MARK IN HANDCUFFS BEHIND HIM, AND SADLY RETURNED TO CLEVELAND AND MATT TALBOT ALONE.

YESTERDAY, BROTHER THEO RECEIVED THIS LETTER FROM MARK FROM HIS PRISON CELL:

"HI BROTHER THEO:

I AM NOT QUITE SITUATED AS OF YET, BUT I FELT I MUST GET A LETTER OFF TO YOU , THE STAFF AND MY FRIENDS IN CLEVELAND AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. MY SPIRIT IS SERENE AND I DO HAVE A PURPOSE IN LIFE TODAY. SO DON'T FEEL BAD FOR ME FOR I DON'T. I PRAYED THE NIGHT BEFORE WE LEFT TO LET ME BE BLESSED WITH ACCEPTING THE LORD'S WILL, AND I WAS. I'VE STARTED TO SHARE THE MESSAGE OF THE 12TH STEP [BRINGING HOPE AND ENCOURAGEMENT TO OTHER SUFFERING ALCOHOLICS]. I'M NOT PREACHING BUT MANY THAT I KNOW ARE COMING UP TO ME AND ASKING, YOU SURE DO LOOK FRESH. WHAT'S UP-- AND I TELL THEM OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS AND WHAT IT HAS DONE FOR ME AND OF THE GOD OF MY UNDERSTANDING. I KNOW ONE DAY AT A TIME I WITH MY GOD AND PRAYERS OF FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES SHALL BE JUST FINE. IT'S MY FIRST NIGHT HERE SO I DON'T KNOW EXACTLY ABOUT MEETINGS [OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS] IN HERE. BUT I'VE HEARD THERE ARE SOME. IF NOT I'LL START ONE. MY MOTHER GOT MY BIG BOOK [THE SPIRITUAL PROGRAM OF AA] TO ME IN THE COUNTY JAIL AND MY 24 HOUR BOOK [AN AA PRAYER BOOK] SO I'M QUITE EQUIPPED. YOU KNOW THE BIGGEST BLESSING I HAVE COMING IN HERE IS THE FACT THAT I WALK THROUGH THE DOOR WITH MY GOD ALREADY IN MY HEART. MANY ARE SEARCHING AS I WAS BUT IN ALL THE WRONG PLACES. MANY GET AA IN JAIL--I COME IN WITH IT. THE LORD HAS BEEN VERY GOOD TO ME. I KNOW THERE WILL BE MANY TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS HERE. BUT WITH GOD ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE. I THANK EVERYONE FOR THEIR PRAYERS AND I PRAY FOR YOU ALL. MISSING YOU ALL. MARK...."

FROM HIS PRISON CELL--MARK, AS THE SAMARITAN AND
LEPER--TEACHES US HOW TO GIVE THANKS. MAY WE ALL THIS
THANKSGIVING DAY--WITH THE SAMARITAN AND WITH MARK--HEAR
THE WORDS OF CHRIST: STAND UP NOW AND GO YOUR WAY: YOUR
FAITH AND LOVE HAS SET YOU FREE!!

*MY FRIENDS, ASIDE FROM THE SAMARITAN LEPER IN THE GOSPEL AND MARK,
THE PRISONER WHO IS FREE IN CHRIST, THERE IS A THIRD SAMARITAN. IT IS
BECAUSE OF THIS THIRD SAMARITAN THAT I CHOSE TO COME TO SAINT LEO'S TODAY.
I WOULD LIKEN HIM TO THE "GOOD SAMARITAN" IN THE GOSPEL WHO HELPED THE MAN
WHO HAD BEEN FELLED BY ROBBERS.*

*YOUR PASTOR, FATHER WILLIAM EYLAR, WILL RETIRE IN JANUARY. BECAUSE
I WILL BE UNABLE TO BE PRESENT WITH YOU THAT DAY, I FOUND NO BETTER OCCASION
THAN THANKSGIVING DAY TO COME TO SAINT LEO'S AND OFFER HIM A PERSONAL WORD
OF APPRECIATION, AFFIRMATION, AND AFFECTION FOR HIS OUTSTANDING, GENEROUS
YEARS OF PASTORAL SERVICE TO THE DIOCESE OF CLEVELAND AND THE PEOPLE OF
SAINT LEO'S.*

*FATHER EYLAR, OVER THESE YEARS YOU HAVE BEEN A PRIEST AND PASTOR
AFTER THE HEART OF JESUS, THE GOOD SHEPHERD AND THE GOOD SAMARITAN. BIG-
HEARTED IN YOUR KINDNESS, CARE, AND CONCERN, YOU LEAVE AN INERASCIBLE MARK
ON THE SOULS OF YOUR PEOPLE AND THE LAITY, RELIGIOUS, AND CLERGY WITH WHOM
YOU LABORED. ESPECIALLY TO ME AND TO OUR PRIESTS, YOU HAVE BEEN A MODEL
PRIEST. ON THIS THANKSGIVING DAY, WHEN WE ALL COUNT OUR BLESSINGS AND
ACCLAIM THE BOUNTIFUL GOD WHO GIVES THEM, I THANK THE LORD FOR YOU AND
ASSURE YOU OF MY PRAYERFUL AND FRATERNAL SUPPORT IN THE YEARS AHEAD.
AS WE GATHER AROUND THIS SACRED TABLE, THE PRE-EMINENT MEAL OF THANKSGIVING,
KNOW THAT WE SHALL ALWAYS REMEMBER YOU IN THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD.*

Waks address → Mark H. Palmer

No. W9266

R.D. 2[#], Box 10

Greensburg, Pa. 15601

Hi Bro Theo:

I am not quite situated as of yet, but I felt I must get a letter off to you the staff and my friends in Cleveland as soon as possible. My spirit is serene and I do have a purpose in life today. So don't feel bad for me for I don't. I prayed the night before we left to let me be blessed with ~~the~~ ~~lord's~~ accepting the lord's will, and I was. I've started to share the message of the 12th step. I'm not preaching but many that I know are coming up to me and asking, you sure look fresh. What's up and I tell them of Alcoholics Anonymous and what it has done for me. And of the God of my understanding. I know one day at a time I with my God and prayers of friends and loved ones shall be just fine. It's my first night here so I don't know exactly about meetings in here. But I've heard there are some. If not I'll start one. My mother got my Big Bk. to me in the county jail & my 2nd Bk. so I'm quite equipped. You know the biggest blessing I have coming in here is the fact that I walk through the door with my god already in my heart. Many are searching as I was but in all the wrong places. Many get AA in jail I came in with it. The lord has been very good to me. I know there will be many trials and tribulations here. But with God all things are possible. I thank everyone for their prayers and I pray for you all.

Missing you
all
Mark H. Palmer

SAINT ANGELA MERICI CHURCH
THANKSGIVING 1986

ISAIAH 63: 7-9
COLASSIONS 3: 12-17
LUKE 17: 11-19

MY DEAR BROTHERS AND SISTERS: THANKSGIVING DAY IS TIME FOR FAMILY AND FRIENDS. IT IS NO TIME TO BE ALONE OR AMONG STRANGERS. ^{Further} ~~AND~~ THIS DAY, PERHAPS MORE THAN ANY OTHER DAY THAT WE CELEBRATE, IS A SPECIAL TIME FOR OLD FOLKS. —
FOR THANKSGIVING DAY IS A TIME FOR MEMORIES.

OLD FOLKS DAY--BECAUSE YOU HAVE TO HAVE A FEW YEARS ON YOU TO HAVE MEMORIES TO REMEMBER. FAMILY DAY--BECAUSE MEMORIES ARE JUST A BORING LOT OF OLD STORIES/UNLESS THEY ARE TOLD--AND SAVORED--AMONG THOSE WHO WILL REALLY LOVE THE STORYTELLER AS WELL AS THE TALE, AND UNDERSTAND THEM BOTH.

MEMORY THEN REQUIRES TWO KINDS OF PEOPLE: THOSE OLD ENOUGH TO SHARE A TALE OF THE PAST, AND THOSE WHO REMEMBER ~~AND~~ THE STORIES THAT THEY TELL.

THAT IS WHY THANKSGIVING IS FOR FAMILY/AND WHY MEMORIES ARE FOR THANKSGIVING.

THE SCRIPTURES TODAY ARE FULL OF MEMORIES. THE PROPHET ISAIAH RECALLS THE GLORIOUS DEEDS OF THE LORD IN THE FIRST READING. HE REMINDS US THAT THE LORD HAS INDEED BEEN GOOD TO US BECAUSE WE ARE HIS FAMILY, ~~HIS FOLKS.~~ ^{God} HE HAS REDEEMED US OUT OF LOVE AND PITY WHEN WE WERE NOT ABLE TO CARE FOR OURSELVES--ALL BECAUSE WE ARE A PEOPLE THAT HE CHOOSES AND CALLS HIS OWN.

REMEMBER THAT YOU ARE GOD'S SPECIAL PEOPLE, ^{God's} ~~HIS~~ CHOSEN ONES, THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS TELLS US. THE MEMORY OF WHAT GOD HAS DONE FOR US BRINGS OUR PAST BACK TO US, FRESH AND ALIVE, AS IF RAISED FROM THE DEAD. ~~AND~~ WHEN OUR MEMORY IS FILLED WITH GRATEFUL LOVE FOR GOD, THEN WE TRULY COME TO SEE WHAT KIND OF PEOPLE WE ARE, AND WHAT WE HAVE BEEN CALLED TO BE.

FORGIVE AS THE LORD HAS FORGIVEN YOU--THE EPISTLE ^{CONTINUES.} ~~SAYS.~~ PUT ON LOVE, WHICH IS THE VERY BOND, THE VERY POWERFUL BINDING FORCE OF GOD HIMSELF / WHICH CALLS US ALL INTO ONE, / IN PERFECT PEACE WITH ONE ANOTHER AND WITH THE ONE WHO HAS ^{DONE} ~~SPENT~~ SO MUCH FOR US, CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD. IT IS THE MEMORY OF CHRIST'S WORD IN OUR HEARTS AND IN OUR MINDS / WHICH IS THE VERY SOURCE OF THE RICH WISDOM ^{that} ~~WHICH~~ BRINGS US SUCH ABUNDANT LIFE AND THE BLESSINGS OF SUCH PEACE.

OUR THIRD READING FROM THE GOSPEL OF SAINT LUKE-- TELLS US A DIFFERENT TALE. TEN MEN WANDER IN SEARCH OF MERCY. WE DON'T KNOW MUCH ABOUT THEM, EXCEPT THAT THEY WERE LEPERS, AND THEY WERE TEN. TEN IS A SPECIAL NUMBER IN ISRAEL, BECAUSE IT MARKS THE OFFICIAL NUMBER FOR A CONGREGATION, A REQUIRED MINIMUM NUMBER OF MALES NEEDED FOR OFFICIAL PUBLIC WORSHIP OF GOD. TEN IS SORT OF A CHURCH. TEN COUNTS FOR ALL OF US.

~~NOW THESE TEN WERE LEPERS, RAISING THEIR VOICES TO THE~~ ^{and} LORD, ~~CALLING~~ FOR MERCY. THEY HAVE THE POWER OF TRADITION ON THEIR SIDE, AND THEY SPEAK WITH ALL THE POWER OF GOD'S CHOSEN PEOPLE. THEY HEAR THE WORD OF CHRIST TO OBEY THE ANCIENT WORD OF GOD IN THE SCRIPTURES, THAT THEY GO AND

SHOW THEMSELVES TO THE PRIESTS. ~~AND~~ SO, THEY SET OUT TO PERFORM THE REQUIRED WORK OF THE LAW THAT GOD HAD GIVEN TO MOSES. ~~AND SO~~ IT DOES NOT SURPRISE THEM THAT THEY ARE HEALED.

ONLY ONE IS CAPABLE OF THANKS, / BECAUSE ONLY ONE OF THEM IS CAPABLE OF REALLY REMEMBERING, REALLY CALLING TO MIND THE MERCIES OF GOD. THIS MAN IS AN OUTCAST, A FORIEGNER, DESPISED BY THE PEOPLE, A SAMARITAN. HE IS SO AWARE THAT HE IS LITTLE AND POOR AND HAS NO CALL AT ALL UPON THE LORD, AND NO RIGHT TO EXPECT SPECIAL TREATMENT, THAT HE IS SO VERY MINDFUL THAT EVERYTHING IS SPECIAL, / EVERY MOMENT FILLED WITH GRACE AND GIFT THAT CALLS FOR THANKS AND PRAISE. THE OUTCAST HEALED AND MADE WHOLE REMEMBERS MERCY, AND SO HE COMES BACK, SEARCHING FOR JESUS, CRYING OUT PRAISES TO GOD IN A LOUD VOICE. HE IS NOT AFRAID TO BE REMEMBERED AS A FORMER-LEPER, AN EX-OUTCAST: HE JOYOUSLY AND HUMBLY ACKNOWLEDGES HIS ROOTS, AND THROWS HIMSELF ON HIS FACE BEFORE JESUS, OVERCOME WITH ADORING LOVE AND GRATITUDE.

THIS LITTLE MAN--EX-LEPER AND OUTCAST--ONLY RECEIVES WHAT MOST OF US HAVE ALWAYS HAD, AND SO EASILY TAKE FOR GRANTED--AND IS OVERCOME WITH GRATEFUL LOVE, BECAUSE HE IS MINDFUL OF HIS ROOTS, MINDFUL OF GOD'S SPECIAL FAVOR TO EVEN THE LEAST OF HIS CHILDREN. HE IS PROUD TO BE THE LEAST, FOR ONLY IN HIS LITTLENESS CAN HE EXULT IN THE GREATNESS OF THE GIFT. ^{As the Gospel proclaim} ~~IT IS ONLY THE POOR WHO CAN BE~~ ^{are} FILLED WITH GOOD THINGS--WHILE THE RICH TURN EMPTY AWAY.

TODAY, MOST OF US WILL GO HOME TO WARM HOUSES, MANY LOVING FRIENDS, AND LOTS OF AUNTS AND UNCLES, GRANDPARENTS, MOMS AND DADS, LOVED ONES WHO LOVE US IN RETURN. WE WILL HAVE OUR JOYFUL MEMORIES OF THE ABUNDANCE OF OUR LIVES. BUT IT WOULD BE GOOD IF WE LET A SAMARITAN, A STRANGER AND AN OUTCAST TEACH US, REMIND US WHO WE REALLY ARE, HOW DEEPLY WE STAND IN NEED, AND HOW GREAT ARE THE MERCIES OF OUR GOD.

A SAMARITAN IS ALWAYS A BLESSING--AND THOUGH WE HAVE ALREADY HAD A GOSPEL, I WOULD LIKE TODAY TO GIVE A SECOND HELPING, SOME GOOD NEWS FROM A MODERN LEPER AND SAMARITAN NAMED MARK. MARK IS A YOUNG RECOVERING ALCOHOLIC WHO UNTIL RECENTLY WAS LIVING AT MATT TALBOT INN, A REHABILITATION HOME FOR POOR ALCOHOLIC MEN OF THE STREET, FOUNDED BY THE LATE FATHER BERARD SCARBOROUGH, A HOLY FRANCISCAN PRIEST WHOM MANY CLEVELANDERS REMEMBER WITH MUCH FONDNESS.

THE SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR AT MATT TALBOT A COUPLE OF WEEKS AGO DROVE MARK BACK TO PITTSBURGH TO A COURT HEARING, WHERE MARK FACED THE POSSIBILITY OF A SEVERE SENTENCE FOR SOME BAD THINGS HE WAS CONVICTED OF DOING WHILE HE WAS STILL DRINKING. THERE WERE AMENDS TO BE MADE TO SOCIETY AND THE JUDGE SENTENCED MARK TO A YEAR IN THE PENITENTIARY. BROTHER THEO HAD TO LEAVE HIS FRIEND MARK IN HANDCUFFS BEHIND HIM, AND SADLY RETURNED TO CLEVELAND AND MATT TALBOT ALONE.

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Now, let us turn to the Eucharistic
Table - our Divine Thanksgiving Table,
with Christ
Here, we do what He did at the Last
Supper, offering an unending sacrifice
of Praise to the Father. Here we become
like the one Leper who returned and
said, THANKS!

Walt's address → Mark H. Palmer

No. W9266
R.D. 2nd, Box 10

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Greensburg, Pa. 15601

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