

Land and Bread

Thanksgiving Day
November 27, 2025
Fr. Tony Davis

We tend to over-spiritualize our faith. Yes, it's true that our faith is tied up with the invisible and our eyes are always to be fixed on that which is above. But at the same time, Christianity and the other major world religions, unlike some philosophies of life or other spiritualities, are about history and this world. The goal of our Christian faith is not to escape this world, but to be the transforming presence of love within it. That is the mystery we will celebrate next month at Christmas in the incarnation.

Our scripture readings chosen for today's Thanksgiving Mass are tied up with two things that are very practical and extremely down to earth. They do not let us over-spiritualize our faith or escape into another dimension: they are *land* and *bread*.

In the book of Deuteronomy, the *land* was so central to salvation history. It was a gift from God, a land flowing with milk and honey. It was so sacred that the people were to offer the first fruits of its harvest back to God in baskets through the priests at the altar. They knew that without the land, there would be no harvest and without the harvest, there would be no life. On this Thanksgiving Day, we too celebrate our land, the land upon which

our great country, the United States of America, has flourished. It is also a chance for us to humbly acknowledge the true history of Thanksgiving, which isn't one of harmony among the Native Americans and Europeans, but one of conquest and forced assimilation. We would do well to relearn some important lessons from the Native Americans, such as the sacredness of the land, and strive to correct the mistakes of the past.

Moving ahead to our Gospel today, we heard about *bread* in John 6, known as the 'Bread of Life Discourse.' In this reading, Jesus says, "I am the bread of life" and explains, "for the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." As a Church, we do a great job with treating the Bread of Life, the Eucharist, as "that which comes down from heaven" in the reverence we show towards it, especially in our nice monstrances and tabernacles. We struggle, however, with the second part, which is the more down-to-earth part, "and gives life to the world." Those of us who adore and receive the Bread of Life are meant to in turn be bread and nourishment for others, even those who do not share our same faith. On this Thanksgiving Day we celebrate the generosity of so many people who are sharing their food with others for the life of the world, but we also recognize the many others who will go without a feast today due to poverty and food insecurity.

The Thanksgiving symbols of land and bread ground our faith in this world.

What other symbols ground our faith in this world? How can Thanksgiving make our faith more tangible and practical?

As we continue with this Thanksgiving mass, we celebrate the good things the Lord, our God, has given us. May it make our faith as *grounded as land* and as *nourishing as bread*.