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NOV 25 1982

Remember Thanksgiving's Blessings

THE cynical poet, Ogden Nash, once wrote of Thanksgiving: "If you are grateful for anything on any particular day, by the time you wake up the next morning it's probably been taken away."

He added that the "sum total" of Thanksgiving lore is "Not to be thankful until you're tired of what you're being thankful for."

Those witticisms could be more accurate descriptions of our observance of Thanksgiving than we would like to admit. We have come to a point of observing the holiday while ignoring the spirit of gratitude for which the day is set aside.

Failure to give thanks for our spiritual and material blessings may be thoughtless expressions of our conceit and self-centeredness. We dislike admitting that anyone, especially God, had anything to do with our accomplishments and well-being.

This attitude also may blind us to the fact that powerful forces are eager to take away what we have, especially the freedoms upon which our prosperity and other blessings depend.

A peculiar trait of human nature is that we can see better and think more clearly during adversity than while prosperous.

Thanksgiving occasions recorded in the Scriptures usually followed miraculous events that had convinced God's people that human beings are not in complete control of their own destinies.

The famous Thanksgiving feast enjoyed by Pilgrims in Massachusetts in 1621 followed years of religious persecution, deprivation, physical hardships and severe personal setbacks.

History indicates that only five of the 18 adult women who arrived on the Mayflower in 1620 remained alive by the time of the thanksgiving. They and 13 young girls cooked and served the feast to about 50 Pilgrims and 90 Indians.

Their stern attitudes toward festive celebrations were overcome by the joy of having a reasonably good harvest, that they were alive, and that they had gained liberty they had long sought.

In 1863 President Abraham Lin-

coln designated the last Thursday in November as a national day of thanksgiving. He might have passed it up, because the nation was in turmoil, but hard times seem to focus our attention on the good things we have.

"Hard times" for merchants apparently motivated President Franklin D. Roosevelt to switch the date to the fourth Thursday in November to provide six additional days for Christmas shopping. Now merchants set out Christmas merchandise before Halloween.

Thanksgiving became a time for family reunions and it has served well in this respect. It is especially needed in these days when stability and quality of family relationships are eroding.

There appears to be nothing out of place in celebrating by feasting, enjoying fellowship, watching football or playing games, providing we remember the blessings that make these pleasures possible, and show our gratitude for them.

While enjoying the gifts, we ought not forget the Giver.