



November 20, 2019

Give Thanks for What You Can Do!

Each year since 1621, on the fourth Thursday in November, families gather for a feast to give thanks and to enjoy each other all over our country, while playing board and card games, watching football, and visiting with family.

The United States is sometimes described as a melting pot where different cultures have contributed their own distinct flavors to our American culture. Just as cultures from around the world have influenced American's culture, so today's families from all over enjoy Thanksgiving in their own way.

However, Thanksgiving may be different this year - many families have lost loved ones, and many have gained new members through marriage or new births. There are families with sick loved ones, or they may have loved ones in jail or prison. Wherever we find ourselves, we have to be thankful for the opportunity to live another day to help each other, with our given talents.

St. Martin de Porres Church, located at 5118 W. Washington in Chicago, is my place of worship, led by Fr. Tom Walsh and Deacon William Pouncy. One of our recent teachings is Matthew 25:14-30, the parable of the talents, which is a great story for this Thanksgiving season.

This reading reminds me of the Declaration of Independence where it states, "We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness.

This bible story makes it clear that life gives each us many talents to use as we work hard for our liberty and in our pursuit of happiness. It is our responsibility to use our talents to help improve our families and our communities, and not to bury our talents in the ground.

"If a man is called to be a street sweeper, he should sweep streets even as a Michelangelo painted, or Beethoven composed music or Shakespeare wrote poetry. He should sweep streets so well that all the hosts of heaven and earth will pause to say, 'Here lived a great street sweeper who did his job well.'"

"No work is insignificant. All labor that uplifts humanity has dignity and importance and should be undertaken with painstaking excellence."

Let's be inspired by these last two quotes from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Everyone – including those who are now homeless, or unemployed, or down on their luck – everyone - must recognize that they

have talents, and that they can make a difference when they walk around and see brothers and sisters in need.

Here is another quote, this one from John F. Kennedy: "One person can make a difference, and everyone should try." Let's give thanks this Thanksgiving for our individual gifts and talents, and let's continue to use our talents to help others.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'LSK', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

La Shawn K. Ford
State Representative-Eighth District