

The following was included in a monthly newsletter for the Catholic Foundation of Central Florida:

As the saying goes, “We don’t always know what we have until it’s gone.”

The last two years have given us challenges and trials no one expected. One minute everyone was looking forward to spring vacations and summer was just around the corner. March Madness was about to begin. New movies were set to premiere. Life was ready to be lived. But within the span of a few days, everything changed. COVID-19 became the forefront of our lives. New concerns over health and safety, including the well-being of loved ones, dominated our lives. People were worried about money, their jobs, and how the pandemic would change the way we live. These were unprecedented times and it seemed every day brought a new reminder of how much was different.

Thanksgiving is a holiday many of us spend surrounded by family and friends. Hours of preparation leads to dinners filled with turkey, stuffing, macaroni-and-cheese, and sweet rolls. In the days leading up to Thanksgiving, one of the most common questions to be asked is “Who are you getting together with?” Food and family are synonymous and Thanksgiving is a time to receive generous helpings of both. More than food, there are other traditions families hold dear. Some families watch football while others spend the day playing cards. Keeping with the spirit of this holiday, some families even gather together to visit retirement communities or to volunteer their time, to share the blessings they have received. Spending this time together is so important that people may travel for hours just to spend a few days with the people they love most.

The Thanksgiving of November 26, 2020 was different. Families were divided across states and continents. The dinners were made and some of the favorite foods were prepared, but there were less people to share them with. There was no extended family and friends sitting at the same table. We were all giving thanks for life and our health, but without that poignant reminder of all that we are grateful for: family.

This year, let us be more thankful than ever for God’s grace and mercies and for all of the blessings we have received. When we gather together with our families, we should take time to reflect on everything we have been given, no matter how small and give thanks by sharing those blessings with others.

As Catholics we are called to the table to give thanks for our gifts every mass, a gift we did not all get to partake of last year.

At the beginning of the Liturgy of the Eucharist, the priest leads the Church in a prayer of thanksgiving to God. The word thanksgiving itself holds a special meaning to the mass, as

“Eucharist” means “thanksgiving.” The bread of the Eucharist is meant to come from the community as an offering of gratefulness.

This year, remember that when we give the gifts we have received to others, we are joining in the sacrifice as an offering.

At the Foundation, we give thanks to all of our donors who have shared their blessings with us. Each gift is a reminder of how fortunate we are and the joys that are only found in God’s love and grace.