

As Thanksgiving approaches . . .



*. . . we give thanks for our
American Heritage*

The lyrics of the familiar song “America the Beautiful” harken back to our passionate American spirit of faith, liberty and nobility.

The first verse expresses our country’s varied and splendid physical beauty stretching forth “from sea to shining sea”. Above and beyond the goods of spacious skies and alabaster cities, our country is crowned by the higher, lasting gifts of faith and charity. We recognize everything as gift coming from the generous hand of God who has granted them to us despite our unworthiness. The spirit of Christianity on which our country was founded puts generosity and eagerness to do good into the American heart. We ask God for the preservation of these higher gifts that we may seek the good not for ourselves alone but for others too. We sing:

O beautiful for spacious skies, for amber waves of grain, for purple mountain majesties above the fruited plain! America! America! God shed His grace on thee and crown thy good with brotherhood from sea to shining sea!

The second verse reminds us of the grand American spirit embodied by the pilgrims who strove westward, war heroes who fought for freedom at high cost, and individuals who undertook to live moral and upright lives. Today atheism and selfishness appear rampant in the hearts of our people which serve to morph our hard won freedom into a type of enslavement. We pray on behalf of our country that God may “mend thine every flaw”, and heal everything falling short of the great American and Christian ideal. May we once again let God direct our steps. We sing:

O beautiful for pilgrim feet whose stern impassioned stress a thoroughfare of freedom beat across the wilderness! America! America! God mend thine every flaw, confirm thy soul in self-control, Thy liberty in law!

Thirdly, “America the Beautiful” reminds us that at one time, the American spirit embraced the Christian challenge to rise above base-level worldly success. Progress was not limited to amassing wealth but included serving the common good and endeavored that “all success be nobleness”. Some Americans, particularly our military veterans, became “heroes proved in liberating strife” because they possessed the will to fight and endure for a higher cause: “more than self their country loved”. God generously refines the gold of the American heart when it seeks the divine. We sing:

O beautiful for heroes proved in liberating strife, who more than self their country loved and mercy more than life! America! America! May God thy gold refine, till all success be nobleness and every gain divine!

“America the Beautiful” is as much a prayer as it is a patriotic hymn. It aptly expresses the American spirit of gratitude and praise to God for the immense gift of this outstanding nation. We cannot rest on our laurels basking in the glory of what our country has attained in the past by the grace of God, because it is just that: a grace. It is all too easy to shirk the needs of our brothers and sisters, to settle for wealth rather than aim for the higher goods, or to sink into selfishness and allow our faith in God to recede. Let us imbibe once again our grand American spirit through the grace of God, and endeavor to put our gifts to work for His glory and the good of all.

Thanks be to God for his immense goodness to us. God bless America!



Dominican Sisters of Mary
Mother of the Eucharist