

Thanksgiving 1996

THANKSGIVING DAY
A PROCLAMATION BY THE COUNCIL OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS
OF METROPOLITAN CHICAGO

Members of the Council of Religious Leaders pray for the fulfillment and welfare of the people of the greater Chicago area. We laugh with those who laugh and weep with those who weep.

There is much to rejoice in, to celebrate these days. We are reminded that Thanksgiving is distinctly an American celebration. It does not celebrate a victory or the end of a terrible war. It does not recall a famous leader. It is a spiritual experience of gratitude by a people who lived at the edge of existence and were deeply grateful for the harvest and the hope it provided for the days ahead.

We call all people to give thanks to God for our blessings. We have much to be grateful for--the end of the cold war, the increased numbers of people employed, new discoveries in health resources and better relationships of a diverse people

Yet there is much to weep about. As the first Thanksgiving story is told, early New Englanders put five grains of corn at each plate. They were a reminder of the harsh days when food was in short supply. All devout people, thanking God for their blessings, will know that many of our neighbors have a short supply of food, limited hope for employment, inadequate housing and fear for their personal lives. Around the world there are millions of people who are homeless, starving and victims of conflict and hatred.

As leaders of the Christian and Jewish communions in this area, we call upon all to thank God for our gifts and privileges. Let our thanksgiving lead us to deep concern for and prayers about those who today live on the edge of existence. The sincerity of our prayers will lead us together to find ways of bringing healing and hope to each other.

The death of Joseph Cardinal Bernardin, and the subsequent reflections on his eagerness to bring diverse groups of people together, provides a setting for our prayers. If we are truly grateful for the privileges and gifts we have received, we will also be responsible in the use of these gifts for the benefit of all people.

The Rev. Thomas A. Baima, President
The Rev. Dwight Bailey, Treasurer.

1996