

**From our home to yours...**

**Happy Thanksgiving!**



**Bishophurst front yard 2024**

Dear friends in Christ,

*“Now thank we all our God, with hearts and hands and voices; who wondrous things hath done, in whom this world rejoices. Who from our mothers’ arms, hath blessed us on our way, with countless gifts of love, that still is ours today.”*

This Sunday many of us will be singing this well-known communal hymn of praise and thanksgiving. There is a beautiful story behind it which makes it inspiring, poignant and meaningful. I think this hymn should be sung more often than once a year, but on every occasion where hope and deep gratitude meet.

The writer of *Now Thank We All Our God* is German Pastor Martin Rinkart who served in the walled town of Eilenburg during the horrors of the Thirty Years War between 1618 and 1648. At the beginning of 1637, the year The Black Death began there were four ministers in Eilenburg. But one abandoned his post for healthier areas and could not be persuaded to return. Pastor Rinkhart officiated at the funerals of the other two. As the only pastor left, he often conducted services for

as many as 40 to 50 persons a day—some 4,480 in all. In May of that year, his own wife died. By the end of the year, refugees had to be buried in trenches without having a funeral service.

In the midst of all that tragedy and unspeakable loss Pastor Martin Rinkhart composed the hymn we still sing, and which has become one of the most beloved Thanksgiving Hymns of all times. It has been said that he didn't intend it to be used publicly but for him to sing with his children before their meals and before bedtime. Knowing this can change the way we sing the hymn. There is a progression in it as it moves from a place of gratitude acknowledging God's many blessings to seeing the harsh reality of life around us. Yet, the hymn continues, that even in the storms of life God is present and promises to be there in the future. When we place our trust in God, we are able to look to the future in a posture of unwavering hope.

The ability to develop a spirit of gratitude regardless of our situation is a statement that we believe that God is at work in our universe and that all things work to the good for those who love him. Such an attitude makes for a joy and a peace that is beyond price.

This weekend Canadians will be gathered around tables of every shape, size and description to enjoy the company of family, friends and strangers as we celebrate Thanksgiving. A number of our parishes will be hosting turkey dinner to those who would otherwise spend Thanksgiving alone. Many of us will be donating food items to local Food Banks which will in turn give out thousands of bags of groceries so those struggling to make ends meet can enjoy a meal. Bread will be broken, and wine shared....and every meal will be an act of thanksgiving - Eucharist. If it has been a long time since you celebrated Eucharist in a community of faith know that you will be warmly welcomed in any of our churches. However, as you are celebrating Thanksgiving this year, may it be for your loved ones a rich time of love and joy, and much laughter.

May you know the abundance of God's blessings in your home, family, church and community this Thanksgiving.

*O may this bounteous God  
through all our life be near us,  
with ever joyful hearts  
and blessed peace to cheer us,  
to keep us in his grace,  
and guide us when perplexed,  
and free us from all ills  
of this world in the next.*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Anne". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross-like mark above the first letter.