

## **“THE FIRST THANKSGIVING” NOVEMBER 2006**

Henry Ford was one of the great pioneers in the auto industry. His foresight and innovations helped to revolutionize transportation in our country. In an interview with the Chicago Tribune, Ford made the famous comment, “History is more or less bunk.” His focus was on the future and he did not spend time looking back. Many people today share Henry Ford’s point of view and we have become a nation with a short memory. Too many people see history as boring and irrelevant.

In a little while, we will be celebrating Thanksgiving Day. Most Americans look forward to the holiday because it begins a four-day weekend, is a time of special family dinners, and there is non-stop football on television. Oh yes, we Americans also know that Thanksgiving Day has something to do with the Pilgrims. For the vast majority, there is only a surface knowledge of the origins of this national holiday.

That first Thanksgiving is a story of courage and faith. The men and women who paused to give thanks to God inspire us even today. Their story should not be neglected or forgotten. A band of 101 Pilgrims set sail from Plymouth, England on September 16, 1620. It took them 55 days to cross the Atlantic Ocean and arrive in America. They landed at what is now Plymouth, Massachusetts and began building their first house on Christmas Day. Half of the group died in that terrible first winter. After they gathered in their first harvest, Governor William Bradford proclaimed a Thanksgiving Feast. It was three days of feasting with wild turkey and venison. They celebrated with the Native Americans who had helped them survive. The Pilgrims gave their heartfelt thanks to God.

The story of that first Thanksgiving has inspired Americans for generations. The faith, courage, teamwork, and perseverance of the Pilgrims are qualities that we need today. We are reminded of the words of the psalmist,

*“Enter his gates with thanksgiving,  
and his courts with praise.  
Give thanks to him, bless his name.  
For the Lord is good;  
his steadfast love endures forever,  
and his faithfulness to all generations.”  
(Psalm 100:4-5)*

This November, let us joyfully celebrate Thanksgiving Day. Let us enter God’s house with the purpose of thanking him for his many blessings. As we do this, we will continue that tradition which the Pilgrims began.

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