

*Now thank we all our God, with heart and hands and voices,
Who wondrous things has done, in Whom this world rejoices;
Who from our mothers' arms has blessed us on our way
With countless gifts of love, and still is ours today.*

*Oh, may this bounteous God through all our life be near us,
With ever joyful hearts and blessed peace to cheer us;
And keep us in His grace, and guide us when perplexed;
And guard us through all ills in this world, till the next!*

*All praise and thanks to God the Father now be given,
The Son, and Him Who reigns with Them in highest Heaven—
The one eternal God, Whom earth and Heav'n adore;
For thus it was, is now, and shall be evermore.*

It's thanksgiving week here in the US and so this week I want to focus on, what else, Giving Thanks. But I thought I'd do it with a look at some of our more popular Thanksgiving carols. Yup, I said "thanksgiving carols". When I say "Christmas carols", a flood of emotion, memory, and music fill our minds. But probably not when I say "Thanksgiving carols". This phrase takes more mental work, yet for those who have been in the church a while, we know these hymns and songs. On Wed. night we celebrate our Thanksgiving Eve service online, and we'll be singing these carols, so I want us to take some time to ponder them first.

Take a moment and read through the words of the Thanksgiving carol at the top of this note. I know, you already read it, but read it again... slowly. Let the words sink in. This is a good exercise for us to do with poetry like this. Take a few minutes and as you read, see which phrase sticks out to you. Or in the words of my Spiritual Direction work, which words "sparkle"?

For me, it was clearly the line about His blessing us "from our mother's arms." As soon as I read these words, I knew these had some meaning for me today. So I sat with this line, these words, and just let my mind wander. And as always, God spoke.

I lost my mom this year, and this line evoked the image of her holding me as an infant. Of course I don't remember this but I can imagine it, and I know it happened again and again. During this pandemic, I have really needed God to cradle me in His arms like my mom used to. In fact, that's what I think I need most right now. More than giving me stuff, more than blessing my work, more than guiding my steps or forgiving my sins, I need God to simply cuddle me, squeeze me softly, and tell me it's going to be ok. How about you? Can you even imagine this? Can you close your eyes and feel it? Hear it? Smell it?

This is prayer, and a very important form of prayer that we don't do very often. So today, use your "holy imagination" with whatever word or phrase stands out to you. Get creative in how you hold this part of the song up to God, and then let Him use it to bless you.

And then, of course, give thanks.