

UNITED THANK OFFERING

Prayers



VOLUME 1

Introduction

Still Thankful, After All These Years

The United Thank Offering is 114 years old in 2003. It is based on the very sound theological premise that it is good to give thanks to God, and it actualizes our universal belonging, connecting our thankfulness with the needs of the world.

In the Bible we are told that God is the Creator of all. We are brought back time and again to this central point, which is the beginning of our reverence and our gratitude. We are thankful not only for the glories of creation and the blessings bestowed on us, but also for the assurance of God's redemption and steadfast love, which sustain us through all things. There is deep joy in our gratitude. Theillard de Chardin said, "Joy is the infallible sign of the presence of God." Just as alienation is a telltale sign of sin, joy is the telltale sign of God with us, and joy springs from deep gratitude.

In his book *Gratefulness, the Heart of Prayer*, Brother David Steindl-Rast writes, "*Ordinary happiness depends on happenstance. Joy is that extraordinary happiness that is independent of what happens to us. Good luck can make us happy, but it cannot give us lasting joy. The root of joy is gratefulness. We tend to misunderstand the link between joy and gratefulness. We notice that joyful people are grateful and suppose that they are grateful for their joy. But the reverse is true: their joy springs from gratefulness. . . . We hold the key to lasting happiness in our own hands. For it is not joy that makes us grateful; it is gratitude that makes us joyful.*"

In the *Book of Common Prayer* the two versions of the Great Thanksgiving demonstrate the two aspects of this thankfulness, that it is both required by God and an expression of our grateful joy. *Rite I* – "It is very meet, right,

and our bounden duty, that we should at all times, and in all places, give thanks unto thee, O Lord, holy Father, almighty everlasting God.” Rite II – “It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.”

We proclaim our thanks; then we live it out by giving an offering. What is very special about this offering is that once given, it is released. It is truly given away. The giver does not designate what will happen to it, but trusts that it will be granted to projects that meet established criteria. Projects must expand the mission and ministry of the church and/or meet compelling human need. These criteria are broad enough that there can be great variety in the way the funds are used.

Steindl-Rast says this about thanksgiving: *“On a superficial level, the giving of thanks is merely a social convention. Its forms vary greatly. In some societies the absence of all verbal expressions of thanks indicates not a lack of gratitude, but rather a deeper awareness of mutual belonging than our society has. To the people in question, an expression like ‘thank you’ would seem as inappropriate as tipping family members would seem to us. The more we lose the sense of all belonging to one big family, the more we must explicitly express that belonging when it is actualized in some give-and-take. To give thanks means to give expression to mutual belonging. Genuine thanksgiving comes from the heart where we are rooted in universal belonging.”*

The United Thank Offering gives us an opportunity to live out our thankfulness, and that is why it remains vital in the 21st century.

Joann Chapman
United Thank Offering Coordinator

*T*HANK YOU LORD!

For trinkets, thunder, things large and
small, happening, exciting and
challenging,
awkward moments, a time to grow,
names of my many friends,
kittens, kites, and kids, fullness of energy,
sunshine, smiles, and surprises,
love's all around.

THANK YOU LORD, for being YOU!

Peggy Ann Wilds
Diocese of Michigan

Thanksgiving Prayer

Melt my heart, Dear One,
with your mysterious warmth
so my frozen body is flooded
with the gift of
gratitude.

Phoebe Griswold

I It has been a long journey today, God,
as I climbed the mountain—this one very real, so
many others more symbolic.

I contemplate food and rest with gratitude. But most of
all, I give thanks for my body, made in your image—for
feet and toes,

for knees and even thighs I so often disdain, for shoulders
which carried my pack and hands which marked the
rhythm of our steps, for heart and
breath.

Today they carried me well.

Margaret Rose
Episcopal Church Center

FATHER, today I give you thanks for a new sunshiny day filled with possibilities to serve you and to experience your presence in others.

I give you thanks for my little mission church that has burst its sides to make room for others to join in worship.

I give you thanks for these flowers that come as the result of seeds planted decades ago, for it is not often that we live to see the fruition of our efforts.

I give you thanks for the United Thank Offering because it has given me an arena to serve. It has opened doors of opportunity for me to continue on that journey of being all that you created me to be.

Joy Tway
Diocese of Central Gulf Coast

Jesús, mi amigo! Hoy es un gran día,

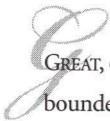
Quiero darte gracias, por amarme tanto,
yo también te amo.

Nubes y montañas se unen en el horizonte
así me siento unida a tí.

Gracias por mi espíritu
porque puede volar como una paloma
y ver la grandeza de la vida.

Mariposas y flores muestran tu ternura,
así quiero mostrar al mundo,
lo que has hecho en mí,
soy feliz eso te lo debo a tí.

Marivel Milien
Diocese of Dominican Republic



GREAT, GRACIOUS AND GOOD GOD, your mercies are bounded only by our capacity to accept them:

Give us sight clear enough to see your gifts, hearts warm enough to accept them, and willing hands with which to share them; through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

The Rt. Reverend Douglas E. Theuner
Diocese of New Hampshire

Dios de misericordia te damos infinitas

Gracias por todas tus bondades, pido que continues bendiciendo el trabajo de la OFRENDA UNIDA DE GRACIAS, de manera que podamos continuar con la misión de repartir los dones que se reciben mediante la oracion y loas ofredas en las Cajas Azules.

Por quien dió su vida por cada uno de nosotros.


Virginia Norman
Diocese of Dominican Republic

*D*EAR GOD, today I thank you for my sisters and brothers throughout the world who inspire and challenge me. Bless them and me in our daily lives. Give us all the grace and humility to receive your gifts to us. Allow us to be humbled by our sharing of your gifts with others who are willing to welcome us into their ministries through the United Thank Offering.

All this I pray in the name of Christ.

Amen

Gini Peterson
Diocese of Atlanta

 Oh such love
The Son does rise
He gives us light
And clear blue skies
He gives us rain
And flowers grow
He give us love
That we should know
That we are His
And our hearts sing
Yes, thank you Lord

Josephine Mosdell
Central Gulf Coast

My Thanks Abound!

So small or large, daily things,
Each one, a grateful gift,
My thanks abound.

Keys and photos found,
Computer parts all working now,
E-mails read and answered,
My thanks abound.

Tires repaired, oil changed,
Brakes holding, car washed,
Insurances paid,
My thanks abound.

A restful night,
Less aches and pains,
Energy to visit friends,
My thanks abound.

My sister's calls,
Friends stopping by,
Fresh warm hugs,
My thanks abound.

Neighbor's help,
Telephone chats,
Kids laughing,
My thanks abound.

Two loads done,
Softener remembered,
Sunshine and breezes,
My thanks abound.

Mailbox filled,
Invitations received,
Newsletters read,
My thanks abound.

Colorful freshness,
Varieties of shapes and sizes,
Flowers galore,
My thanks abound.

I am among God's abundance,
Me, simple and plain,
Creativity, gifts, talents numerous,
My thanks abound to my Lord.

Peggy Ann Wilds
Diocese of Michigan

*D*EAR HEAVENLY FATHER, your wisdom is
overwhelming. You have given me so much
cause for rejoicing in the start of each new day.
You are an awesome GOD who delights to answer
our prayers even before they are on our lips.

Thank you!

Amen

Nancy Skinner
Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast

*G*ENEROUS GOD, we thank you today for the gift of young people. We are grateful for their sense of adventure, courage and vulnerability to your Spirit. Help us to respond to their curiosity, struggles, and aspirations. Give to them the gift of prophecy that you give to every generation to call us to your saving way revealed in the ministry of Jesus the Christ. Amen.

Thomas K. Chu
Episcopal Church Center

A Dios, quien lo provee todo,
Elevamos nuestra oración de gracias:
Por todas sus bendiciones agradecidos
somos, Señor, danos siempre de tu gracia.
Amén.

Juan I. Marquez
Episcopal Church Center



DEAR FATHER

Thank you for the world in which we live
and for the ups and downs we encounter.
The ups make us rejoice
and the downs make us reflect.
Help us in all these circumstances
to love and trust and serve you all our days.

Inez Thomas
Diocese of Washington

Thanksgiving for the Birth of My Granddaughter

O DEAR GOD!

Look at her!

So fragile, so strong, so amazing.

Look at her mother!

So tired, so beautiful, so full of joy.

Look at her father!

So gentle, so loving, so proud.

My grateful tears flow like a holy river;

My heart pounds with joy.

The blessings of Sarah, Rachel, Hannah,
of Elizabeth and Mary, pour down on us all.

My only words are,

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Bavi Edna (Nedi) Rivera
Diocese of California

*T*HANK YOU, GOD,
for the gift of your Holy Spirit
who strengthens, comforts, inspires
and sustains me through the
distractions and confusions of my days.

Marion Luckey
Diocese of Northern Michigan

*M*OST GRACIOUS AND LOVING GOD, by whom we live and have our being, we thank you for a night of rest. Cleanse us from yesterday's memories; leaving only what is necessary for today to do your work. Strengthen and enable us for the day ahead, and let your discerning spirit be our guide all the day long. We ask this in the name of your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen

Barbara Hopwood
Diocese of Minnesota

W E THANK YOU LORD for this new day
And for the brightness of each sun's ray,
For the loving care and patience you give
So with hope and not fear we may live,
For health and safety and strength to run the race
As well as the blessings of your forgiving grace,
We give you thanks dear Lord.

Marie Rogers
Diocese of Lexington

An Evening Prayer

Please hear my words, dear God,
for they are from my heart.

I thank you for today, my God,
from the bottom of my heart
as night is now coming
and the day comes to an end
please help me sleep tonight,
for tomorrow's new beginning.

Edith Ray
Diocese of Western Massachusetts

*A*fter hurtling through the sky in a tiny metal tube, being buffeted and bounced by high winds, skidding on snow runways, worrying about missed flights, once again I thank you for bringing me home safely, Lord. You know that I love visiting new places and meeting new people, but the perils of the journey are sometimes frightening. Still I know you have a job for me to do, and I am thankful you are with me through every jounce and skid. But as Dorothy said, "There is no place like home" – thanks for my safe return! Amen

Pamela Stewart
Diocese of Long Island

*M*MERCIFUL AND LOVING GOD, giver of all good gifts, praise to you and thanks for another day, a day filled with your wonderful gifts. Thank you for family and friends, for children and grandchildren, and especially for your love.

In this time of unrest in the world, be with our men and women far from their homes and families; comfort their loved ones who are fearful and lonely. Help us all to cling to your promise that you will be with us always. Amen

Donna Musgrave
Diocese of Oklahoma

O LORD, OUR GOD, you have created all the things
from the smallest particles of matter to the greatest
mysteries of the vast galaxies in our heavens.

Help us to be mindful of those in need of a share
of your abundance and so to distribute our thank
offerings that we may further your purpose on this
good earth. Amen

The Rev. Dr. Richard M. Wilds
Diocese of Michigan

*G*RACIOUS GOD, you have filled us with the knowledge of your love for us by sending your Son to live among us, die for us and rise again so that we might be filled with your spirit. Open our eyes in new ways to see your work in all creation, and rejoicing in that creation enable us by your Spirit to serve others with gladness all the days of our life, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Barbara Hopwood
Diocese of Minnesota

Prayer Over the Blue Box

O LORD,
thank you for the blessings in my life—
my family and friends.
I Pray that these coins
go to those who need them,
that their lives may be turned around.
I ask this in your Son's name.

Betsy Kyle
Diocese of Connecticut

G GRACIOUS GOD, thank you for all the wonders of this beautiful earth which you have entrusted to our care. Help us to live together peacefully and to treat it with respect so that it will be a home for future generations.

Thank you for the daily manifestations of your love and blessing through the companionship of family and friends.

Thank you for providing us the opportunity to give generously and prayerfully of our abundance to help others.

Muriel Sobers
Diocese of Long Island

*H*ow wonderful you are, O gracious God. The
unfolding beauty of the natural
world is your gift to us. Through the love of our
parents you give us life.
By the guiding presence of family and friends you
shape us. In the water of
baptism you make us your sons and daughters.

Feed us each day through our study and prayer.
Let compassion and justice
guide all that we do. Be known to us, as you
promised, in the breaking of
bread. Amen

Wayne P. Wright
Bishop of Delaware

 DEAR LORD,

Where do I begin to tell you all that is in my heart?

I hear you answer

“I know it all before you pray”.

Thank you, Lord, for knowing me before I know myself.

Thank you for faith to know that you are with me.

Thank you

for life,

for family,

for friends,

for work to do...and good health to do it.

Thank you, Lord, for your glory that is in all the world.

Dottie Leland
Diocese of Spokane

*B*ecause God restores me to health and wholeness,
I am thankful.

Because God's initializing energy floods my
whole being, and heals me
I am thankful.

Because the life of Christ quickens my life and
brings healing to my very being,
I am thankful.

Because I have new life in Christ and my spirit is
healed,
I am thankful.

Because the life and strength of God are alive in
me,
I am thankful.

Because I am made whole of mind, body,
and spirit through Jesus Christ,
I am thankful.

In the name and by the power and authority
of Jesus Christ
I am alive today and I am thankful.

The Rev. Carmen Bruni Guerrero
Episcopal Church Center

*T*HANK YOU, GOD for
talents shared, trips enjoyed,
tea parties,
hand made gifts,
harmonious music heard,
anniversaries celebrated,
answers received,
newborns, names remembered,
birds' nests found,
kites flying, kitten's fur, kids playing,
smiles received, solitude enjoyed, seasons.

Peggy Ann Wilds
Diocese of Michigan

*A*LMIGHTY GOD, in Jesus you came to us to set us free and give us a new way of living. We thank you for your gift of grace and forgiveness which cleanses and renews us. Thank you for sending your Holy Spirit who blows freely in our lives. Thank you for your new community, the church, where we can experience you together and know your deep and life-changing power. Thank you for loving us through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

The Rt. Rev. Henry Wm. Scriven
Assistant Bishop of Pittsburgh



DEAR GOD,

It has not been a great day. There have been a lot of "little pin pricks" that caused minor irritation or disappointment.

What can I find to be thankful for?

My African violet is developing buds. I will soon have a beautiful purple flower.

Thank you, God.

My granddaughter emailed me another religious joke. I had heard it before, but it was amusing and she took the time to remember me.

Thank you, God.

A friend called to ask me to spend tomorrow morning running errands.

Thank you, God.

An elderly lady on the third floor is back in her apartment after a stay in the hospital.

Thank you, God.

My daughter-in-law called just to say "Hi".

Thank you, God.

Well, I have several reasons to use my "little Blue Box" after all.

Thank you, God.

It has not been such a bad day after all.

THANK YOU GOD!

Claudia N. Pistek
Diocese of Delaware

*Y*ou are always with me.
Your energy is ever present.
In daily ministries, large and
small you are supportive.
For your sustaining LOVE,
I say, "THANK YOU."

Peggy Ann Wilds
Diocese of Michigan

*F*ATHER, you really do work in mysterious ways. Thank you forever walking with me and for the wonders you *have done, and do still, perform in* my life. I thank you, Lord, for the gift of life and love, and especially for your constant love, the greatest gift of all, from you, the giver of all good gifts. Amen.

Thelma Hutton
Diocese of New Hampshire

*B*OUNTIFUL AND LOVING GOD, we thank you for the riches of creation, especially those things that it is easy to take for granted: the beauty of nature, fresh air, clean water, food to eat, and a place in which to live. Help us to be mindful of the many blessings which fill each day and to commit ourselves anew to providing these same blessings through the sharing of our resources with others. Help us to be bountiful in response to your love by sharing and caring and in reaching out, especially to the poor, the disadvantaged and the marginalized. Loving God, we thank you for the many relationships which continue to sustain us and pray that we may be responsive in our love to those who do not enjoy those relationships, who live alone, feel dejected, are depressed or are without supports. Move our hearts that we may be supportive of them as a reflection of your many supports to us. All of these things we ask in and through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen

The Rt. Rev. Robert W. Ihloff
Bishop of Maryland

M My little Blue Box sits on my kitchen table...

So many thoughts,
So many memories,
So many prayers,
So many blessings,
So many coins.

Thank you, Gracious God for allowing me to acknowledge my blessings as your work, your grace and your love.

Thank you, Heavenly Father, for helping me to feel and to know your presence in the little Blue Box.

Thank you for helping me to reach out to others in need with my little Blue Box. May it overflow with coins as my love for you overflows. Thanks be to God. Amen

Far Parker
Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast

*M*Y HEAVENLY FATHER, may I begin this day with
praise for your gifts, thankfulness for your
continual guidance and the willingness to follow
in your ways. Amen

Beth Jett
Diocese of Lexington

Dios de misericordia te damos infinitas gracias por todas tus bondades, pido que continues bendiciendo el trabajo de la OFRENDA UNIDA DE GRACIAS, de manera que podamos continuar con la misión de repartir los dones que se reciben mediante la oración y las ofrendas en las Cajas Azules.

Por quien dió su vida por cada uno de nosotros.

Virginia Norman
Diocese of the Dominican Republic

Notes



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