



Prayer and thanksgiving

By Chris Reynolds
President

This time of year, we are reminded to set aside time to thank God for all the blessings we have received. But what if we were to take this thankfulness into our prayers and lives throughout the year?

Paul tells us in Philippians that in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving to let our requests be made known to God, and by doing that we will have the peace of God. By going to God in prayer we can have this peace that only comes through resting in Him.

Prayer with thanksgiving in everything — that means thanksgiving through the crosses we are called to bear as well as the blessings bestowed upon us.

How do we do this? It is easy to thank God when we have obvious blessings in front of us: health, family, loved ones, shelter, food etc., but we're told to pray with thanksgiving in everything and that is how we will have this peace from God.

We need to remember the example and commandment of our Lord Jesus, who, for the joy that was put before him, was willing to suffer the cross.

Jesus said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Lk 9:23).

This past year at Gospa Missions and Abode for Children, we have had our share of crosses, but we have also had our share of blessings.

As I reflect back, I have been amazed to see how God has been at work. There have been many times I have prayed for a specific blessing, and it seemed like there was no answer, or the answer was yet another cross. However, God has always worked some good through it.

He is faithful, and when you start looking for the ways he has brought about blessings in your day-to-day life, you begin to see the reasons for thanksgiving abound.



A photo of Tom Rutkoski on a table at our retreat on Aug. 29.

As you read through my reflection on this past year, you will notice there are more blessings than crosses, and that this work of God, through prayer and thanksgiving, brings us peace when we understand and trust that God has an eternal plan for us, for our work and for our lives.

A great blessing to us this past year was the success of our annual Gospa Missions retreat that we had in August. Our theme was "Reviving the Faith." We celebrated the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass; held a Holy Hour of Adoration; prayed the rosary together; and were blessed to have five guest speakers who encouraged and taught us about the faith.

Our speakers this year were: Pittsburgh Auxiliary Bishop William Waltersheid, Vicar for Evangelization; Canon Matthew Talarico, provincial superior of the Institute of Christ the King Sovereign Priest, USA; Sister of the Children of Mary Faustina Maria; Dr. Ray Guarendi, psychologist and

radio and TV host; and myself.

Over 220 people attended and we received a lot of positive feedback from them. Look on page 6 for pictures and highlights from the retreat.

You can find recordings of all the speakers as well as pictures from the day on our website gospa.org.

Mark your calendars for Aug. 3, 2024, for our next retreat. Our keynote speaker will be Bishop Joseph Strickland, from the Diocese of Tyler, Texas.

We have also been blessed with yet another successful year hosting Our Lady's Power Hour, making it the third year since we began it in 2021 with over 130 evenings of praying together.

We started Our Lady's Power Hour after the Lord put it on my heart, as well as on Bishop Strickland's, that we should

Gospa Missions

Mission Statement: Gospa Missions is a nonprofit organization headquartered in Evans City, PA.

It was established in A.D. 1990 for the purpose of evangelizing the world's people to the Catholic Church.

Gospa Missions is dedicated to serving our Lord, spreading devotion to His Blessed Mother and general faith-building. We are obedient to our bishop, spiritual directors and the Magisterium.

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Gospa Missions' religious goods store, Amazing Grace, is also available for your conference or event.

This newsletter is dedicated to the Holy Spirit.
May we always
do God's will.

A Message from Mary Rutkoski

Tom made many trips to Medjugorje with the hopes that the pilgrims he brought there would be able to: experience closeness with Our Lady of Medjugorje, discover peace that only God can provide and be inspired to become witnesses of the truth.

It's hard to believe that 31 years have passed since Tom made that fateful trip to

Medjugorje, which helped him to begin viewing Thanksgiving in a different light. It makes me think that Tom would be encouraged if we all began to ponder things in our lives that we could view in a more grateful way this Thanksgiving.

God bless you and happy Thanksgiving!

Happy Thanksgiving

By Thomas Rutkoski

Founder



November, the season for thanksgiving! I can't help but think back to past Thanksgiving holidays and I now realize how unthankful I have been.

The original pilgrims who started this tradition had a perspective of great need and with an abundance of food they had from their harvest they were thanking their Creator, recognizing that it was He that should be thanked because without Him there would nothing.

This is just my personal belief, but I think through the years we have increased this holiday in its grandeur and decreased it in actual thanksgiving to God for all we have.

I always enjoyed the gathering of friends and family for a large turkey dinner and yes, grace was said, but that was about as much as God was involved in the day. I've just returned from Medjugorje — and I'll tell you more about it later — and the pilgrimage gave me a new insight into Thanksgiving.

This trip was entirely different from all the other pilgrimages. In the other pilgrimages, there was always a lot of group prayer and sharing together. With this trip it was not so, and I think it was because it was more of a time for personal reflection on what we experienced.

As we climbed Krizevac, we could hear the mortar shells over the next hill and it gave us reason to pause. Our running through the streets of Mostar witnessing the destruction there, gave us this new insight to thanksgiving.

In retrospect, this pilgrimage seems to have been made so that we could experience human suffering at its highest level, and that we might return home to do something about it. This, for me, will make this Thanksgiving holiday a lot more meaningful, and hopefully the thanksgiving spirit will be an everyday occurrence.

Too often in my life I've read about wars and disasters and felt compassion but never really tied it into my prayer life and thanking God for the peace I experienced each day. Again, too often, I've keyed on the negative aspects of my life, always asking God for help in those, and far too little time spent thanking Him for the good things.

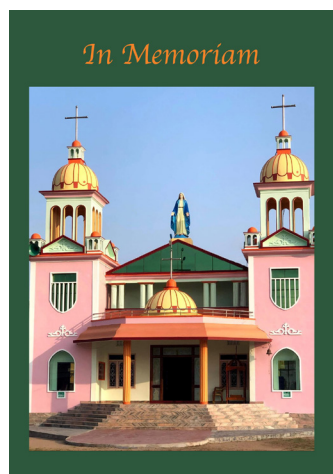
My prayer this holiday is that we will all become more thankful and more willing to help those in the world with truly great need.

Reprinted from November 1992

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Thomas Rutkoski'.

Mark your calendar for our next retreat on
Aug. 3, 2024 with Bishop Joseph Strickland

Updated Mass cards available



A donation was made to
Abode for Children by

for the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass
to be offered for

by the priests of the
Diocese of Guntur, India.



We have updated India Mass cards available for purchase. They are available as “In Memoriam” and “Thinking of You.” If you have a special occasion or intention you want to send a Mass for or in memory of a loved one, please call us at 724.538.3171. Masses are offered by our priests in India at Our Lady of Grace Church on the Abode for Children campus.

Thanksgiving message from the staff

This Thanksgiving, as we set aside time to reflect on all that we have to be thankful for, may we share this brief list of some of the things we are most grateful for this year:

- We are grateful for the people who walk beside us in this thing we call life.
- We are grateful for all those who support our Abode for Children; to help children live more peaceful lives; and to give them a good education and solid foundation for life.
- We are grateful for all who enter the doors at Amazing Grace Books & Gifts or browse the online catalog at Gospa.org. We are even more grateful for those who conclude their visits with the purchase of some items which support our mission of the orphanages and school.
- We are grateful for those who have participated in our retreats — from our speakers to attendees to those behind the scenes who helped to put it all together — and who have been fortified by our topics into evangelizing others.
- We are grateful for those who participate in our weekly “Our Lady’s Power Hour” — our visitors, guest speakers and especially our main speaker Bishop Joseph Strickland of Tyler, Texas who provides wonderful reflections that fill our souls with hope.

The staff at Gospa Missions & Abode for Children

Follow us at
facebook.com/gospa.missions
facebook.com/amazinggracebooksgifts

Our Lady’s Power Hour

with reflections by
His Excellency
Bishop Joseph Strickland

We will be praying
for our families, our Church and our
country

WEDNESDAY NIGHTS

at 9 p.m. EST

To join, sign up at
www.gospa.org
and click on the banner
at the top of the page.



Set of Four Books by Thomas Rutkoski, founder of Gospa Missions

Despite his dyslexia and other issues, God used Tom Rutkoski in a powerful way. He never imagined he would or could write a book, much less four. Read “Apostles of the Last Days” and marvel at the lengths God will go to win a soul. Witness amazing things in “Miracles” and continue discovering the path to sanctity in “Great Divide” and “My Scriptural Rosary.” Are you ready?

Set of four books, \$30

That’s a 45% discount!
You save \$24.95 off the individual prices!

Moving forward with Abode for Children

This past year at our orphanages and school has been a busy one filled with blessings.

The children at Mary Rose Buds School are well into their new academic year and have been thriving in both their studies and in their daily life. The children have been enjoying getting to use the pavilion we added last winter for lunches as well as celebrations, using it for everything from a farewell celebration for last year's graduates, to teacher appreciation day.

With all the maintenance and updates we did to the grounds over the past several years finally caught up, we were able to finally move forward with construction of our Junior College for Girls, which is a project that has been on our hearts for quite a while. We are excited to finally be in the construction stages and our girls are excited to soon have this opportunity to further their education.

With the season of Advent around the corner, we expect to have Christmas letters from the children for their sponsors to send out soon. We love getting these letters and hearing first-hand from our sponsor children about their day-to-day lives and what has been most meaningful to them over the past year.

In keeping with our theme of thankfulness for blessings bestowed, may we say once again how thankful we are for all our sponsors, donors, and prayers for these children!

On this page, you see pictures of the children at various celebrations and feast days. On Sept. 8 they celebrated the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary and had a Teacher Appreciation Day. Back in August they enjoyed celebrating their Independence Day and the Feast of the Assumption. A special Mass was also said in honor of St Anthony of Padua for the Girls Junior College.

Understanding that children are our future, Abode for Children is committed to providing a solid education based on Christian values, combined with nurturing care, food and shelter to children in some of the poorest regions of the world. Currently we have built and are maintaining two orphanages and a school in India.

To learn more about our very important mission, go to www.abodeforchildren.org and like us on Facebook.



Our children playing in the new playground area.



The children take part in a procession for the feast of Our Lady of the Rosary on Oct. 7.



Above, students take part in a teachers' appreciation event on Sept. 8, 2023. Left, teachers pose for a photo during the event.

Phase two of Girls Junior College underway

Construction on our Junior College for Girls is moving along. We finished phase one of the project, which included digging and installing the footers and foundation.

We started phase two, which is construction of the first floor. We are continuing with faith that God will provide the balance of the funds needed to finish construction in time for opening the next school year.

Thanks to a generous donor, we have a \$60,000 matching gift towards phase two. We have raised \$23,700 (including individual donations and \$7,500 pledged by local Rotary Clubs) of the \$60,000 match as of Oct. 16. We hope to complete the third and final phase of construction by spring of next year. We are extremely excited to see how this has progressed since we initially broke ground back in April, to be where we are today! Here you will see pictures of the groundbreaking and the various stages of construction.

To see more pictures and videos and to learn more about this project, visit abodeforchildren.org or like us on Facebook for updates.

We have raised \$203,700 of the \$360,000 to complete the project by spring. Can you help us?

Right, construction workers build a column to support the upper floor.

We need your help!
Donate
today at
abodeforchildren.org



Sister Fatima with the 10th-grade girls who will be moving on in the spring hopefully to our new Girls Junior College.



Above, construction on a ground floor wall takes place. Right, crew members construct the building's frame.



Our annual retreat offered inspiration, joy

The retreat on Aug. 29 was a huge success. We had over 220 people register; it was a great faith-filled day.

As well as hearing from some great speakers, we also celebrated the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, confessions throughout the day, blessings of objects purchased in the store and fellowship over a fabulous lunch.

Mark your calendars for Aug. 3, 2024 for our next retreat. Bishop Joseph Strickland of the Diocese of Tyler, Texas, will be our keynote speaker.

Visit the retreat page on gospa.org for more photos as well as speaker recordings.



Archpriest Douglas Lorraine, pastor of St. Michael the Archangel Greek Ukrainian Catholic Church in Lyndora, Pa., and Sister Faustina Maria, a founding member of the Sisters of the Children of Mary from Cincinnati, Ohio, share a conversation during the retreat.



Left, attendees during the Reviving the Faith retreat held at Highfield Community Center in Butler, Pa. on Aug. 19. Above, President of Gospa Missions and Abode for Children, Chris Reynolds, gives his testimony and reflects on the Luminous Mysteries at this time in history.



Left, Auxiliary Bishop William Waltersheid of the Diocese of Pittsburgh speaks on the Holy Eucharist. Right, Canon Matt Talarico, who was a speaker and Mass celebrant, blesses religious items purchased at the Amazing Grace store.



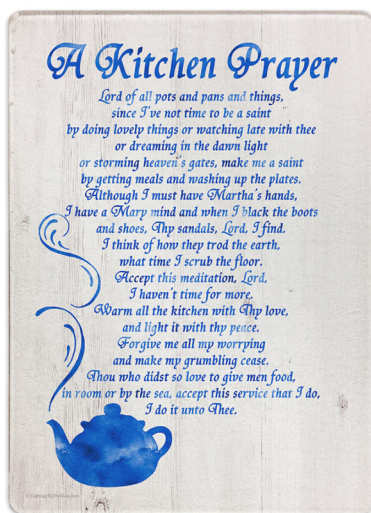
Left, Dr. Ray Guarendi, clinical psychologist, author, radio and TV host, speaks about raising children and adoption.

Thanksgiving and Christmas options from Amazing Grace

Glass cutting board kitchen prayer

GBS-18D, \$39.95

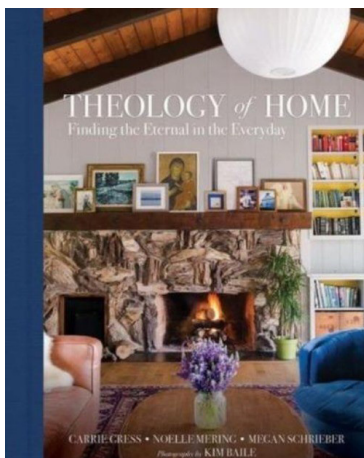
This cutting board is made from tempered glass and is durable, easy to clean and more sanitary than wood or plastic. It has rubber feet for stability and to provide airflow underneath. While not recommended for heavy duty chopping and cutting, it makes a beautiful serving tray and can double as a counter protector or trivet. 100% U.S. made, dishwasher safe, 12" x 15."



"Theology of Home: Finding the Eternal in the Everyday"

2623, \$34.95

This is far more than a book of beautiful photos and great décor ideas. You will also learn how to create a deeper sense of the divine through: Creating a welcoming environment that starts with your door; fostering a sense of remembrance through images, scents and activities that will keep your family recollecting joy, family and Christ and more.



Measuring Spoons:

"Together is Our Favorite Place"

MSS104, \$18

"Together is our favorite place to be" measuring spoons features a different message on each spoon: "Joy, Faith, Love and Memories" making it essential in anyone's kitchen.



Advent Wreath: Nativity

VC680, \$44.98

This 3.5" resin Advent wreath features a three-dimensional replica of the Nativity scene.



Peace Nativity Figure

059-0460, \$27.95

Each piece is lovingly created in stone/resin. Gift boxed. 8.25" H.



Mini Plush Baby Jesus in Swaddling Cloth

J5407, \$5

This plush mini Baby Jesus is perfectly soft and safe for kids. Includes a "to & from" gift tag. 4.5" H.



be praying more. “Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving” (Col 4:2).

We are thankful and blessed to have Bishop Strickland continuing to give the reflections most weeks. In addition to Bishop Strickland, we are thankful for Deacon John Ragan from the Diocese of Pittsburgh, Father Adrian Hilton from the Oratory of St. Philip Neri in Cincinnati, Father Cizik from the Diocese of Pittsburgh and Father Henry Hoffman from the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, all blessing us by their willingness to be guest speakers when Bishop Strickland is unavailable.

We produced and recorded all the Mysteries of the Rosary, which are now available on our website, as well as a video library of all our past reflections from Our Lady’s Power Hour so that anyone can use these resources to pray and reflect upon. We need more people praying.

Some other blessings that come to my mind are the Gospa Missions vlog and blog, our quarterly newsletters, our websites and those we reach through social media.

I cannot believe it has been well over a year now since I started doing vlogs, where I take just a few minutes a couple of times a week to reflect upon whatever the Spirit has laid on my heart. I am truly amazed that so many people watch them. I am blessed and thankful for the support and encouragement these bring to me as well.

Our blog posts that go out each week about different saints and devotions help remind us of others who have gone before us in prayer and thanksgiving of their own.

We have continued to publish our newsletters and added a Newsletter Archive to our website where many of our back issues can now be found and read. What a blessing to be able to offer these newsletters and to have the opportunity to share articles, prayers, encouragement and updates to build others in their Faith.

Another blessing in the past year is our newly updated Gospa Mission website, and our new Amazing Grace Books and Gifts Facebook page. If you haven’t visited recently, I’d encourage you to take a look and follow the page. We brought in a lot of new items this past year, both in the store and online.

We continue to travel to Magnificat breakfasts and are blessed and thankful to

How could I reflect back on both prayer and thanksgiving without mentioning the blessings we have in prayer? Prayer is a huge part of our day here at the mission, where we pray at least four times daily as a group. During these times of prayer, we lift up the intentions of all those that have asked us to pray for them.

have a presence at these events with our traveling store. This past year saw us going to Magnificats in Pittsburgh, Greensburg, P.A., and Morgantown, W.V.

We have been blessed by all the volunteers and staff here at Gospa Missions and Abode for Children. Only through their dedication have we been able to accomplish all that we have in this past year.

We are blessed to have recently partnered with My Catholic Will to allow you to easily pass on your Catholic faith by naming our charities in your will or making a legacy gift. Check out the insert in this newsletter or go to our website for more information.

There are the blessings we have had when it comes to the physical building here at the mission. I am thankful for the volunteers God has brought forth to help us with some of the projects that needed to be done; that no major repairs were needed in the past year; that even though we have not been able to raise the money to complete the renovations we planned, we continue in the faith that it will happen in God’s time.

This pause in the renovations at the mission has allowed us to focus on raising funds for and starting construction on our Junior College for Girls in India. We are thankful and blessed to have been able to start this project that we have been praying over and planning for for some time now.

We broke ground officially back in March and are now in phase two with plans to complete the Junior College for Girls in time for the next school year. This will open many opportunities for the young ladies at our orphanage and the surrounding areas that they would not otherwise have. We hope and pray our work there will lift up the entire community and that the Lord will do His work through us.

Another blessing we have at Abode for Children is in the letters that are exchanged between the children and their sponsors. The children are so encouraged to hear from their sponsors and to know that people are praying for them. It is amazing to hear from the children how their lives have been impacted for the better and how thankful

they are for God’s Blessings in their lives.

As I look back, one of our biggest crosses from the past year has been the rebuilding of Abode for Children and the database we use to run it. Yet, even this cross has been filled with many blessings.

Though the work has been painstaking and sometimes very slow, it has allowed us to streamline our systems internally, and on a more personal level, it has helped us to get to know the children and our sponsors.

How could I reflect back on both prayer and thanksgiving without mentioning the blessings we have in prayer? Prayer is a huge part of our day here at the mission, where we pray at least four times daily as a group. During these times of prayer, we lift up the intentions of all those that have asked us to pray for them.

These times of prayer are a blessing. It helps us to have planned times of prayer set aside throughout each day to refocus our hearts and minds and to pray for others. It also helps as we seek to surround all our work in the spirit of unceasing prayer.

“Always rejoice. Pray without ceasing. In all things give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you all” (1 Thes 5:16-18).

As we come to the end of another year, we give thanks for all the blessings that have been bestowed upon us. The one thing I have learned through this past year is the need to pray unceasingly and be thankful in all things. We need to continue to keep prayer first and foremost and be thankful for whatever God gives us, be it a cross or an obvious blessing. Even those crosses will turn out to be blessings in God’s eternal plan.

Instead of being anxious or worrying about tomorrow, let’s take everything to God in prayer — He will answer us and bring all things to work together for His good purpose. Knowing and trusting in our Lord will bring us the peace we are seeking.

My prayer today is that you won’t forget that Jesus loves you. God bless you and know that we are praying for you each and every day!