



In five more days, we Americans will take time to count our blessings—or at least we should. After all, we will once again be celebrating Thanksgiving.

Of late, I've been pondering what Thanksgiving means to me and why I think it is one of the greatest American holidays we celebrate. At some time in our daily lives, each of us deals with happiness, sadness and everything in between. Through the years, I've tried to mentally dwell on the good things in life and avoid the negatives. I remember hearing as a child that if you go through life with your head down, you'll miss the blessings.

Webster defines a blessing as, "a gift of divine favor." With resounding certainty, over the years I have received and experienced many of these heavenly gifts.

First, being born in America, to a loving family, was definitely a miraculous blessing. I often wonder why I was born in America and not in a third world country or somewhere else where life seems unimaginable. We Americans recently observed Veterans Day — paying tribute to those individuals who gave their all to preserve the blessings of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. We Americans should never take these blessings for granted.

Furthermore, I've often wondered why I was born into the family that I was. All I can say is, "How grateful I am that such a divine favor was bestowed." I married a beautiful, loving wife. I've been blessed with children and grandchildren. I have a wonderful extended family and numerous friends. What more could a man ask? Perhaps I'm not deserving, but I am extremely grateful.

As strange as this may sound, I also feel blessed that through the years I was able to develop and nurture a passion for gardening and have the job that I have. I'm convinced that gardeners experience certain gifts that others who don't garden miss. Posted on the wall in my office I have a saying written by an unknown author. It says, "I am thankful that gardens

exist, for the garden is our repose, and the garden makes all who take part, better human beings.” I firmly believe that. My love for gardening continues to grow as I grow older. Although the garden is actually a place where plants are nourished and grown, for us gardeners it is a place to nourish our souls and to grow spiritually. I’m convinced that gardeners are reverent servants of nature, and thereby nature becomes therapeutic for the gardener. The late Rachel Carson, an American marine biologist and conservationist, put it so eloquently when she said, “There is something infinitely healing in the repeated refrains of nature — the assurance that dawn comes after night and spring after winter.”

Unfortunately, as I stated earlier, life also brings sadness and sorrow—none of which I view as a blessing. However, I do find solace in what Henry Wadsworth Longfellow said in his poem, *The Rainy Day*. “Be still, sad heart, and cease repining; behind the clouds is the sun still shining; Thy fate is the common fate of all, into each life some rain must fall.”

Blessings are a divine gift. Take time this Thanksgiving to give praise and say thank you for all your blessings. Remember, the material blessings we enjoy from day to day are temporary, but the spiritual blessings given to us span eternity.

Happy Thanksgiving.