My Brothers and Sisters of St. Paul’s Church,  
  
Thanksgiving Greetings!  
  
I wanted to take this opportunity to send a letter to you as we come upon the Holiday Season, especially Thanksgiving.  
  
The Bible tells us in 1 Thessalonians 5:18  - “in everything, give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you”.  
  
I don't know about you, but I find this verse easy to read but a bit difficult to follow at times. Paul doesn't just tell the Thessalonian church to “be thankful when all is well,” but in “everything, give thanks”!  
  
That word “everything” seems to carry the idea of … well, everything!  
  
I have little doubt that you have gone through times of significant testing, and at the time, and especially as the pandemic lingers, it is hard to find a lot to be thankful about.  
  
Another verse that brings home this powerful truth is found in Romans 8:28 “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose”.  
  
Perhaps a good way to better appreciate and understand these verses is to think about a chocolate cake. No, not pumpkin pie, but chocolate cake!  
  
We can see many of the ingredients in chocolate cake and would never think of eating them as a single ingredient, such as flour, cocoa powder, baking powder, baking soda, salt, and more! Yet, add some sugar, eggs, milk, vegetable oil, and vanilla extract and mix them in correct portions and bake, and out comes something that tastes amazing!  
  
While that's a bit of a simple illustration, it does bring home the fact that God knows the “big picture” of what He wants our lives to look like. He doesn't focus on one event or even two, and even when we think it's what we would call “impossible,” God can perform amazing miracles with life's “ingredients”!  
  
Indeed, we can be thankful in all things and at all times if we remember that our lives are in the hands of a loving and powerful God!  
  
I know the past months have been very challenging for all of us, but let's thank God for all things! The key is to keep a thankful spirit, not only one day a year, but “at all times”!  
  
This Thanksgiving, why not take a few moments as a family sometime during the special day to share briefly about what you are thankful to God about?  Personally, I would like to thank you: thank you for being faithful in difficult times; thank you for your continuing generosity; thank you for expressing your opinions (even if we have disagreed); thank you for your forgiveness and understanding when it was me that was the cause of your anger, doubt, misunderstanding or annoyance; thank you for being such wonderful brothers and sisters to me and one another.  I am so very happy to be with you.    
  
On behalf of our staff here at St. Paul’s Church, I would like to wish you and yours a wonderful Thanksgiving!  
  
May God continue to bless you and Our Lady of Mt. Carmel protect you always,  
  
Fr. Sean