



## **GIVING THANKS FOR THE HARVEST**

*These gifts have been given to mankind to use and enjoy,  
and they are free gifts (Divine Love and Wisdom 334).*

The Lord has given us many gifts for our use in this world. Among these are the grains, fruits, and vegetables that we harvest at the end of the growing season. For thousands of years, people have celebrated and thanked the Lord at harvest time, grateful for the food that would sustain them. Even if we are not actively involved in bringing in the harvest, we can take time to thank the Lord for the gifts that we receive from Him.

**READ: “God’s Bounty”** by the Rt. Rev. George de Charms

“In the sight of the Lord the real harvest is not the fruit of the earth, but the spirit of thanksgiving in human hearts, because the Lord, in all things, looks to what is eternal. Material food is essential to the life of the body, but gratitude is a vital necessity for the nourishment of the soul.

**FOR FAMILY DISCUSSION: “O Give Thanks Unto the Lord”**

In the New Church, families often say this blessing before meals: “O give thanks unto the Lord; for He is good; for His mercy is for ever” (Psalm 107:1). What do these words mean? By reflecting on this common prayer, we can open our hearts and minds to give true thanks to our Lord for His many natural and spiritual gifts. Here are some ideas that you may wish to discuss with your family.

**ACTIVITY: Harvest Display**

Make a display celebrating the variety of gifts that we harvest from the Lord’s Creation.

**SING: “Come, You Thankful People, Come”**

**READ: “A Time to Remember”** by Rev. Frederick L. Schnarr

We thank the Lord every day in our prayers, at meals, and when we go to bed, but it is different when we stop and think about all the things in our life at one time. Remembering all the things to be thankful for at once is very powerful and good for us.

**ACTIVITY: Wreath of Praise** (for ages 7- up)

Here is a beautiful harvest wreath for you to fill with words of praise and thanksgiving to the Lord. Write your own words or choose a psalm to copy here. Then color the wreath of fruits and vegetables.

**COLORING PAGE: O Give Thanks unto the Lord** by Robert Glenn

**SING: “O Give Thanks unto the Lord”**

## SPIRITUAL NOURISHMENT

*“Do not labor for the food that perishes,  
but for the food which endures to everlasting life” (John 6:27).*

Just as natural food is essential for sustaining our natural lives, so spiritual nourishment feeds our spiritual development. These activities for various ages can help us think about the Lord's spiritual gifts.

**READ: “Thanksgiving for the Lord's Harvest” by Rev. B. David Holm**

In the Word the “fruit of the earth” stands for or *corresponds* to the spiritual food the Lord gives us. And what is this spiritual food? It is the Lord's good and truth—His love and His wisdom. This is the food we must have if our minds are to be fed and our characters to grow and be healthy.

**READ: “The Fruits of Creation” by an unknown author**

The fruit that we eat contains many seeds for future plants and fruit. In this way, the Lord has endowed each plant with His own quality of infinite giving. As we contemplate the wonders of creation and how they reflect the wisdom of the Creator, the fruit of genuine thankfulness can ripen in us.

**PROJECT: The Word Is Like Fruit (for ages 5-12)**

Make a special apple-shaped book to picture the layers of meaning in the Word, comparing the skin to the literal sense, the pulp to the deeper meaning within, and the seeds to the truths that can take root in our minds and bear fruit.

**COLORING PAGE: The Feeding of the Five Thousand** by Jacqueline S. Bostock

**READ: “The Lord's Greatest Gift” by the Rev. Frank Rose (adapted for little ones)**

At harvest time we thank the Lord for the food that He gives to the world. But you can also thank the Lord for the many other things that He does for you.

**ACTIVITY: Spiritual and Natural Gifts (for teens and adults)**

Brainstorm some of the natural and spiritual gifts that you have from the Lord.

**READ: “Three Parts of Being Thankful” by Rt. Rev. Louis B. King** accompanies the project below

**PROJECT: The Grapefruit Book (for ages 9-14)**

This project accompanies the family talk by Bishop King: “Three Parts of Being Thankful”

## THE FIRST FRUITS

*That the firstfruits were to be given to Jehovah, symbolized that it is the first of the church to ascribe all the goods and truths of faith to the Lord, and not to self (Arcana Coelestia 9223:3).*

The Children of Israel were told to celebrate the Feast of Firstfruits when the wheat was ready for harvesting. They were to bring a sheaf or bundle of wheat to the priest who would then wave it before the Lord. They were also to offer lamb, wine, and flour mixed with oil. These offerings represent the acknowledgment that the Lord is the source of all good things. The Lord does not need this acknowledgment, but we need to make for the sake of our spiritual state.

**READ: "The Offering of a Glad Mind" by the Rev. Robert H. P. Cole**

The real harvest, then, is our bearing the fruit of a good life. Let us seek to have the Lord create with in us a meaningful and loving heart and an understanding and glad mind.

**PROJECT: The First Fruits of Our Land We Bring to God (for ages 4-8)**

Put fruit stickers around an altar to show how we bring fruits to the Lord for thanksgiving.

**COLORING PAGE: The First Fruits**

**SING: The First Fruits of Our Land We Bring**

## **CELEBRATING THE HARVEST**

*By the harvest are symbolized all those things  
that spiritually nourish a person... (Apocalypse Explained 911:15).*

As we celebrate the natural harvest, we can reflect on the Lord's desire to help us reap the spiritual fruit that will make us part of His kingdom on earth and eventually come into His heavenly kingdom.

**READ: "Thanksgiving and Rejoicing for the Harvest" by Rev. W. Cairns Henderson**

The harvest is the result of two things—of something that has come from the Lord and of something that has come from human beings. That is why there is both thanksgiving and rejoicing when the last sheaf has been gathered in and the fruits have all been stored up safely. Today, most people are far removed from the life of a farm, but there are many harvests in which we are directly concerned, for there are other harvests besides the yearly ingathering of the fruits of the earth.

**PROJECT: Harvest Wreath (for ages 8-14)**

Color, cut out, and assemble a wreath of laurel leaves decorated with fruits and flowers in the style of the Renaissance artist, Luca della Robbia.

**LISTEN AND SING: "Abundance" by Karen Childs Elder**

Hear the composer sing portions of Psalm 72 set to her original music.

**READ: "Prayer for the Harvest" a sermon by the Rev. Donald L. Rose**

We sometimes think about our regeneration or spiritual rebirth as something that we will focus on later. But remember the Lord's words, "Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest" (John 4:35).

**PROJECT: Cornucopia (for ages 6-12)**

Color the fruits, cut them out, and arrange them so that they are overflowing the cornucopia.

**COLORING PAGE: An Offering to the Lord**

**SING: "The God of Harvest Praise"**

**READ: "Feasts for the Lord" by Rev. Lorentz R. Soneson**

After Moses received the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai, the Lord gave him more laws for the Children of Israel. Among those laws was this: "Three times you shall keep a feast to me in the year."

**PROJECT: Celebrating Thanksgiving (for ages 5-10)**

Here are two pictures showing two important aspects of Thanksgiving celebrations.

**PROJECT: Thanksgiving Procession** (for ages 6-12)

A procession of families bring fruit offerings to the altar in the Cathedral in Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania.

**SING: Come, Sing to the Lord of Harvest**

## **THE FEAST OF INGATHERING**

You shall keep the...the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year,  
when you have gathered in the fruit of your labors from the field (Exodus 23:15-16).

The Children of Israel were commanded to observe three festivals or feasts. The Feast of Ingathering was their harvest festival.

**READ: "Rejoicing Before the Lord" a family sermon by the Rev. Patrick A. Rose**

During the Feast of Ingathering the Children of Israel were told by the Lord to rejoice and be happy, and give thanks for the harvest. Today, we give thanks to the Lord, not simply for His many natural blessings, but also for the blessings of the human spirit.

**PROJECT: The Feast of Ingathering** (for ages 7-12)

Color and assemble this panoramic picture of the Children of Israel celebrating the Feast of Ingathering.

**PROJECT: Celebrating the Harvest in Ancient Israel** (for ages 6-12)

Create a diorama showing people bringing offerings to the Lord.

**JOURNAL PAGE: Rejoicing in the Lord's Gifts**

How can we become more appreciative of the Lord's gifts to us, both spiritual and natural?

**SING: Chant Your Songs of Glad Thanksgiving**

## **BEING FRUITFUL**

All good which is going to bear any fruit begins in the Lord,  
and unless it comes from Him it is not good (*Arcana Coelestia* 9258).

Fruits in general stand for the good things that spring from people's hearts and lives. How can we cooperate with the Lord and become fruitful ourselves?

**READ: "Enjoying the Fruits of Your Neighbor's Vineyard" by the Rev. Grant Odhner**

We are *meant* to gain pleasure and benefit from one another! Our useful service, our acts of kindness, our know-how and skill, our intelligence and wise insights—all these are to be shared.

**PROJECT: Thanksgiving Fruit** (for ages 3-6)

Create a plate of colorful construction-paper fruit to hang up as a Thanksgiving or harvest decoration.

**PROJECT: Seeds Bearing Fruit—Wreath or Ribbon Hanging** (for ages 8-12 or a family)

Let your children add a piece of fruit to this wreath each time they obey one of the seeds of truth from the Lord's Word.

**SING: O Render Thanks to God Above**