

# An American Thanksgiving in Italy

by Ashley Hanney, November 27, 2009

Happy belated Thanksgiving! I pray that yesterday, for each one of you, was a rich time of fellowship and rejoicing in the remembrance of the many blessings of God. We certainly have many reasons to be thankful not only this day but every day that our gracious Father gives us. Are you able to see the brilliant colors of fall and the faces of people you love? Thank You, Father, for the gift of sight! Are you able to relax while listening to soft music and smile when you hear the voice of someone you love on the telephone? Thank You, Father, for the gift of hearing. Do you feel? Can you walk? Do you have food on the table every day? Do you have a job? Do you have friends and family? Are you alive? Thank You, Father, for the gift of life itself. And what about the greatest gift of all, that of being found in Christ? We could lose all else . . . sight, hearing, the ability to run, a job, our friends, our

own life, BUT if we are in Christ, we have it all. And what does it mean to be found in Christ?

*Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order **that I may gain Christ and be found in him**, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— (Philippians 3:8,9)*

Being found in Christ means that by grace I can



*Ashley, Dori, Manuel, Petra, Deni, Martina, Anna, Giovanni, Stefania, Leonardo, Daniele sitting*

identify myself with Him, I have a permanent relationship with Him. When all else passes away, the only thing which will matter to God the Father is if I am found in Christ, for that is the only righteousness with counts with Him. This is a reason to be thankful! Thank You, Father, that I am found in Christ. This is everything.



*Anna from Moldava, and Ashley*

Being thankful not only brings much joy to our own lives personally but it also pleases our heavenly Father. Complaining about our circumstances does nothing but make us miserable and it certainly doesn't change the circumstances in which our sovereign and all-knowing Father has placed us. Of course, this does not mean that we go about our days with plastic smiles. We have problems, there is sadness and there are trials in this imperfect world. But because of Christ, we may be known as a thankful people despite our current circumstances.



*Giovanni and Stefania Bevilacqua with Martina and Leonardo*

Yesterday I was blessed to celebrate Thanksgiving Day with several dear people. I am currently staying with Daniele, Petra and Manuel and they eagerly agreed to let me host Thanksgiving at their home last night. Giovanni, Stefania and their chil-



*Daniele and Petra, Thanksgiving, 2009*

dren Martina and Leonardo came, and Giovanni brought the American flag. Deni and Dori also joined us along with Anna, a widowed believer who just began attending our church this past Sunday, having recently moved to Rovigo from Moldavia. We were full by the end of the evening, not only with turkey and stuffing, but especially with the encouragement we had received from the “thanksgivings” which each person at the table shared. We took the opportunity to go around the table last night and share the things for which we were grateful and then ended the evening with a time of rejoicing in song and prayer. By the end of the evening we had a list of several things for which we are thankful: the peace of God, the strength of God, the grace of God, God's forgiveness, His perfect plans, and especially Christ Himself, *the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world!* (John 1:29).



*Denada (Deni) and Dorina (Dori)*



*Manuel, Martina and Leonardo*

I will close by sharing several verses which Petra shared last night in the hope that this too will be a reminder of what it means to be found in Christ and a stimulus for us to be known as a people who trusts the ways of God, even when we don't understand them. His mathematics are not ours ...

*We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, **yet always rejoicing**; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet **possessing everything**. (2 Corinthians 6:8-10)*

We truly do possess everything in Christ! We have many reasons to rejoice! May we indeed be known as an “always rejoicing” people!

Truly thankful for each one of you!

Ashley

Ashley Hanney  
Via Piave 2169  
4510 Lama Polesine, RO  
Italy

[ashley.hanney@gmail.com](mailto:ashley.hanney@gmail.com)

Send support to:

Vera Vita Ministries  
7001 St Andrews RD  
Suite 233  
Columbia, SC 29212

[www.VeraVitaMinistries.org](http://www.VeraVitaMinistries.org)