

Thanksgiving

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Texts: Deuteronomy 8:7-18

Nov. 23, 2011 The Blessings for Which We Should Be Most Thankful

Of the new shows on TV over the past two seasons my favorite is *Blue Bloods*.
Blue Bloods follows the lives of the Reagan family,
a devout Catholic family that is heavily involved with law enforcement.

The head of the family is Frank Reagan (played by Tom Selleck),
the no-nonsense independent New York City Police Commissioner.
The family also includes his father Henry
who is a former New York City Police Commissioner.

Frank and Henry are both widowers,
which helps us to understand the deep bonds
they have with each other and the rest of the family.

Frank's two sons are both NYC policemen
and his daughter is an assistant District Attorney.
The older son is married and has two sons
and the daughter has a teenaged daughter.

What I like most about the show is not the police drama that unfolds in each episode.
What I like is the interactions of the family.
Each episode has a scene with the family gathered around the table for a meal.

In these scenes as the family talks about the things going on
in their lives...in the city...and in the world...
we see the values that shape their lives—
the love...the nurture...the concern...and the faith.

Whether or not everyone in the family is living in the same house
—I haven't figured that out yet—
it is obvious they are extremely close and involved in each other's lives—
evidenced by the importance of the meal together.

What I like about *Blue Bloods* is that this is one of the few times
Hollywood gets it right.
Instead of presenting us with a family eaten up by dysfunction,
we see a positive family system deeply rooted in faith, love and loyalty.

Sunday night I was watching the Thanksgiving episode.
Early in the show we see Henry in the kitchen
with Linda, the wife of his grandson.

They are having a good time bantering over
the proper way to prepare the Thanksgiving turkey.
While they are going on about Henry's favorite platter for the turkey,
he has severe chest pain and collapses.

Linda immediately calls 911 and Henry is taken to the hospital.
 As the family gathers, we learn he has had a heart-attack.
 The doctor assures Frank that an angioplasty will take care of things
 and that his father will be OK.

While Henry is in the hospital,
 we learn that Thanksgiving is his favorite holiday,
 and he is highly agitated the doctor won't release him to go home.

On Thanksgiving Day when Frank comes to visit his father
 he gets an earful.
 Henry is venting his frustration and anger
 and is dumping it all on his son.

Finally, Frank gets him in a wheelchair
 to take him down to the hospital cafeteria to get a turkey sandwich.
 Henry is grumping and grouching the all the way
 because of having to miss Thanksgiving with the family.

A turkey sandwich from a vending machine
 is not Henry's idea of Thanksgiving.
 In his mind, Thanksgiving is supposed to be
 celebrated with family...with those you love.

As they enter the cafeteria, Henry's scowl becomes a radiant smile.
 As the camera pans from his face to his line of sight, we see what he sees.
 The family has gathered around a table waiting to share Thanksgiving with him.

Since he cannot go home to share the Thanksgiving dinner with the family,
 the family has brought Thanksgiving dinner to the hospital
 to share it with him.
 The table is set just like at home, and everyone is sitting in their usual places.
 The dishes, the silver, the glasses, the wine, the turkey and trimmings
 are all from the home.

Overwhelmed by this act of love,
 Henry asks the honor of saying *grace* for the Thanksgiving meal.
 He makes the sign of the cross and prays:

*Heavenly Father,
 This Thanksgiving Day we give pause to give thanks to you
 for your many blessings—
 for Linda...
 for the food we are about to receive from your bounty...
 for your love...
 for Dr. Jurell...
 and for all those less fortunate in this season of giving...
 and for those who open their door to them...
 for the loving family at this table.*

Amen.

Henry really gets it right in that prayer, doesn't he!

The blessings
for which we should be most thankful
this Thanksgiving Day
are not the things that we have—
but the people that we love
and who love us.

In the goodness of creation, the gift of family, and the gift of his Son,
God has blessed our lives
with his great love.

On this day and on every day, may
our eyes be opened to see these many blessings
and our hearts rejoice in thankfulness to our gracious God.

