

CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

Non-Traditional Gratitude

BY RELG 115 STUDENTS

We are the fall semester students of Religion 115: Green Spirituality for Lifelong Wellness led by Dr. Amy Merrill Willis. This class focuses on the connection between the environment and humanity. During the semester, we have been reading *Braiding Sweetgrass* by Robin Wall Kimmerer as a resource to expand and apply knowledge about the reciprocal relationship between humans and the land. Kimmerer, a scientist and member of the Potawatomi Nation, explains the importance of Thanksgiving in Native American culture and shows us how it differs from typical American conceptions.

Thanksgiving is typically a holiday that is spent with family and friends. However, green spirituality teaches us that thanksgiving can represent more than just spending time with friends and family, but also being thankful for the earth.

Kimmerer emphasizes gratitude for non-human relationships as well as human relationships. This includes the trees for shelter and shade, the food for the energy and strength it gives us, and the animals that surround us and all of the things they have to teach us. She introduces us to the Haudenosaunee Nation's daily ritual called the "Thanksgiving Address," which is a long statement of gratitude. Here's a quote from the address: "With one mind, we honor and thank all the Food Plants we harvest from the garden, especially the Three Sisters [beans, corn, squash] who fed the people with such abundance" (109). Each part of this long address has the same topic in mind; being grateful for the earth around us and what it is able to provide.

"The Thanksgiving Address" ends each paragraph with the phrase "now our minds are one." This ritual seeks to build common ground, unity, and belonging. However, we know that people across the country see Thanksgiving in different ways. Americans often describe Thanksgiving as a day of friendship

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by students in the Green
Spirituality for Lifelong
Wellness class

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including info on student spiritual life student groups,
go to our webpage - link in the email signature.

You can also visit our [Linkt.ree](#)
(Link is in email).

Non-Traditional Gratitude (cont'd)

that began with a feast between colonists and members of the Wampanoag tribe in 1621 to celebrate a good harvest and union between the English and the Native Americans. Sadly, the horrors of Native American massacre and assimilation have made Thanksgiving a day of mourning for many American Indians. For some, Thanksgiving is often a day marked by political arguments among family members. Year after year, unresolved conflicts build animosity between loved ones. In the midst of all these divisions, Kimmerer reminds us to practice gratitude which “leads to an outlook of contentment and respect for all of Creation,” including your family (Kimmerer, 111). Kimmerer teaches us that every day can be a day of gratitude, not just the third Thursday of November.

As we approach Thanksgiving, we hope you will find a deeper sense of gratitude, contentment, and unity with all of your human and non-human relations.

Want to learn more about what Thanksgiving means to local native peoples in Virginia? Listen to this great story from WAMU.org! (Link can be found in the email under the newsletter.)

HUNGER & HOMELESSNESS AWARENESS WEEK EVENTS

SOLIDARITY S'MORES | 11/16, 6:30-7:30 P.M.

Learn more about housing insecurity at Miriam's House

SERVICE PLUNGE | 11/17, 2-4 P.M.

Volunteer at Miriam's House

Dates to Remember

Sundays at 4:30 p.m.
Weekly ROMAN CATHOLIC MASS
in Snidow Chapel
(Mass will not be held on Nov. 20 and Nov. 27 due to Thanksgiving Break. The final Mass of the semester is on Dec. 4)

Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week

November 12-20
See box at Left for
remaining events

Wednesday, December 7
4:30 p.m. in Dysdale
POP-UP

Hot Chocolate, Cookies,
Free Mug, and Care Packages

The Chaplain's Corner is a newsletter published by the Spiritual Life Center (SLC) at the University of Lynchburg. We share campus concerns and updates, spiritual life events and activities, and words for the journey. If you have a joy or concern you'd like to share, reply to this message, email the SLC office - spirituallife@lynchburg.edu, or call 434.544.8348.

We only share with your permission. Current and previous issues are on the SLC page of the University website - go to Link in signature (www.lynchburg.edu/spiritual-life) and click on "Newsletter."