

FROM A FAITH PERSPECTIVE

Hidden blessings

By Richmond Shreve
Correspondent

A traditional Christian Grace often said before meals ends with the words, "...and keep us mindful of those less fortunate." The abundance of our life in America is so commonplace that it's easy to forget that our everyday privileges are not so ordinary in the world around us.

At home, and just about anywhere in the U.S., I can draw a glass of water from the tap and drink it, confident that it's safe and healthful. I don't need to wonder if the tap will flow, nor do I need to save water in jugs — safe water will

be there later, tomorrow, next week, whenever.

If I need sugar, or flour, or milk, I can hop in the car, drive a half mile, and get just what I need from the full shelves of a supermarket. It's not necessary to hoard these staples because I live in a vibrant community and am part of a healthy economy that brings all I want to my neighborhood at affordable prices.

I can pay with a plastic card. The merchant trusts me and my credit card implicitly. If I pay cash, I don't worry about the buying power of my money shrinking overnight. I park my car without fear of it being stolen or vandalized, and I drive it home

with no fear of snipers or bombs or robbery.

I have the goodwill and honesty of strangers to thank for these blessings. I live in a large municipality where people respect one another, abide by the law, and generally seek to serve the common good. Sure, occasional crimes make the news, but they are news-worthy exactly because they are rare exceptions to the shared expectation of peaceable enjoyment of the good things we share with one another as residents.

I enjoy a wide community of friends. Because my wife and I travel in the winter, we are separated from our Quaker friends, and from our Pennswood Village neighbors for

four to five months. I am always moved by the enthusiastic "welcome home, we missed you" greetings when we first return in spring. It's wisely said, "Home is where they miss you when you don't show up."

Mindful of these many hidden blessings of my ordinary life, I feel deep compassion for the situation of refugees. Families driven from homes in Honduras and Syria and other chaotic countries have only a vague hope of finding a safe place to settle and be safe. They set out with all their worldly possessions stuffed in backpacks and plastic bags, with no caring community and no means of

support. The abundance I scarcely notice because I'm immersed in it would be a heavenly bonanza for them — both a sanctuary and a cornucopia after the ordeals of alienation, hunger and homelessness.

This is the Sunday after Thanksgiving. You've probably savored the joy of having your friends and loved ones close by and safe, and I trust the provenance of our great Bucks County community left you feeling satisfied and happy. We are truly blessed to live and work in this great place.

When we pray "keep us mindful of those less fortunate" it is no small thing we ask. There are so very many who are less

fortunate. For us to be mindful and to also uphold our personal integrity demands that we actively seek peace, community, equality, and justice for everyone, with no one excluded, and nobody short-changed. We are all called to practice stewardship of our mother earth and share her abundance with her diverse peoples — all of them everywhere. Being kept mindful is not a trivial matter.

Richmond Shreve is a member of the Newtown Friends Meeting and lives in Newtown. From a Faith Perspective is a weekly column written by members of Lower Bucks faith communities.