

From the Family Research Council (FRC.org)

The Rock on which the Pilgrims disembarked is still shown [and] has become an object of veneration in the United States. I have seen fragments carefully preserved in several American cities. Does that not clearly prove that man's power and greatness resides entirely in his soul? A few poor souls trod for an instant on this rock, and it has become famous, it is prized by a great nation; fragments are venerated, and tiny pieces distributed far and wide. What has become of the doorsteps of a thousand palaces? Who cares for them?

This passage, from Alexis de Tocqueville's classic book, *Democracy in America*, was written in 1835. That was more than two centuries after the Pilgrims first arrived at that cold and rocky spot on the Massachusetts coast in a dreary November, 1620. The place would become their Plymouth Bay Colony. Tocqueville's words show us that even after so long a passage of time, Americans in the 1800s still cherished the stories of their country's beginnings. Now, almost two hundred years after Tocqueville, the story of those early settlers should move us still.

Why did they come? They tell us plainly in the governing document they signed, the Mayflower Compact: "For the Glory of God and the Advancement of the Christian faith, and the honour of our King and Country." They wanted to worship the Lord in the way their consciences and their understanding of Holy Scripture led them, which included building a community in which they could daily live out their faith in Jesus Christ. They called their dangerous effort "an errand into the wilderness." Sadly, many of them died in that first terrible year. Hunger and disease took their toll. But the Pilgrims are honored because they did not give up.

When their little ship, the *Mayflower*, returned to England, not one of their little band abandoned the call. They called on God to sustain them. And they accepted the timely help of the Wampanoag Indians, especially the English-speaking Squanto. Without this help, they might all have died.

The story of Plymouth Rock also reminds us of the Israelites in the Old Testament. They would place standing stones in key places to help them remember how God had led them, how He had watched over them. The Pilgrims identified most strongly with the people of God in the Bible. There may never have been so highly literate a community. All the Pilgrims eagerly learned to read words so that they might read the Word.

This Thanksgiving is a good time to remind our children of the many blessings that Our Lord has showered upon us in the past year. Even in this time of war and of deepening economic hardships, the harvests of our fields are still abundant. Our people have been spared further terrorist attacks, and we passed through a hotly contested election without the violence that too often mars political conflict in less happy lands.

Most of all, we give thanks for the joys of family life. When we gather around a holiday table, the faith, love, and commitment of mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers bind our family circle. Let us also remember to give thanks to God for the brave young men and women who stand guard for us and our blood-bought freedoms in distant lands.

And let us resolve in this season to live as "living stones [who] are being built into a spiritual house." (1 Peter 2:4-5)

God bless you and Happy Thanksgiving.