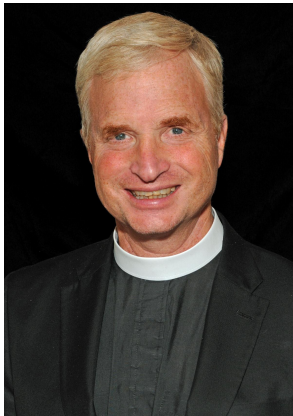




St. Luke's East Hampton Reflections from Fr. Ben

November 26, 2025



To Render Grace

The four years I spent in France taught me that living as a foreigner is a humbling experience. Living away from family and friends, a foreigner is often dependent on complete strangers and becomes extremely grateful for those who lend a hand. Even simple accomplishments like going to the grocery store or figuring out how to use the laundry machine become occasions for thanksgiving! Because of these and many other reasons, Thanksgiving at the American Cathedral in Paris where I served was always a big deal. The Ambassador would

always come and read the President's Thanksgiving Proclamation, a sermon was preached, and later that day, an American Thanksgiving meal with all the trimmings was served for 90 or so of those without a place to go.

During my Thanksgiving there something truly amazing happened that made it even more special. The service had begun. The choir had come in. Suddenly down the aisle came an old homeless man. He wandered, muttering rather loudly, all the way to the front, and, much to the near apoplexy of the ushers, sat down in the front pew, right next to the ambassador. His name was Bernard Petite. Though he didn't understand a word of English, Monsieur Petite had come regularly to the church for over 50 years... to "*rendre grace*" -- that is to give thanks or literally "render grace" -- for help he had received from American soldiers during World War II. Somehow he, a foreigner in the midst of foreigners, knew what giving thanks was all about. More than anyone else there that day, Monsieur Petite, that foreigner in the midst of foreigners, taught us the art of "rendering grace."

Step back for a moment and try to imagine East Hampton through the eyes of an immigrant. Imagine walking through the tower door and seeing St. Luke's for the first time. That person from away would immediately see the great gifts that God has given us and upon being given a chance to move here would most certainly pause to give thanks. He or she would be surprised to find that we who already live here tend to take it all for granted and assume that we have gotten what we deserve, what we ourselves have earned. Our friendly foreigner would be surprised to discover that even in the face of all these blessings we forget to say thanks. We have trouble slowing down, much less stopping to "render grace". Thanksgiving, however, is a time to do just that.