

The small print at the bottom of the wedding invitation brought a smile to my face: “No gifts, please. Your presence is presents enough.”

The invitation came from an older couple. They had all the possessions they needed. They didn’t want a guest to buy a gift that they might not want. Besides, getting people to show up already demands some effort. If people travel to the wedding, participate in the ceremony, interact with other guests, and wend their way home, they are already giving their time. They will help the couple launch a new life from a broader platform of love attainable on their own.

Every marriage changes the relationship between the couple and society. This couple wanted their friends to witness that change by coming to their wedding. That was enough. If spending money on gifts kept some people from attending, forget about it. Who needs material things?

Thanksgiving Day has become the day we thank God for the things we have before we shop for things that people may not need. Our tables will heave with produce from the harvest. God has shown immense goodness to us, and we want to show immense thanks.

Nonetheless, God has been good to us in other ways too. God has given us things - such as the food on the table. But we have received much more. Our life. Our family. Our country. Love. Trust. Faith. We have received the divine presence, not just the divine presents.

The collect for Mass on Thanksgiving Day in the United States of America reminds us of this point. It tells God, “your gifts of love are countless and your goodness infinite.” God offers more than edible gifts. We receive gifts of love.

We want to imitate what God has done. As we have shared in God’s goodness, so we share God’s goodness with others. Often, we don’t have to buy anything. Maybe people don’t need more things.

But they always need our love. Every man, woman and child needs our gifts of loving service. Giving our presence, we give our thanks.