

FIRST LADY'S MESSAGE

What Are You Most Thankful For This Year?

First Lady By: Mary Jane Grauso



This year marks the 400th anniversary of the first Thanksgiving celebrated in Plymouth, Massachusetts by a group of immigrants [Pilgrims] who came here in search of religious freedom and safety from persecution. They celebrated for 3 days along with the Wampanoag Indians who had taught the Pilgrims how to hunt, fish and what plants would grow in the land. Those first Pilgrims had much to give thanks for and celebrate.

This Thanksgiving will look nothing like our past celebrations. This year most of us won't be celebrating in large family groups due to the coronavirus. We want to keep our elderly and high-risk family members safe from the disease. Instead, many of us will be doing Zoom, Skype, or FaceTime with our relatives during the Thanksgiving Holidays.

Like many people around the world, we are separated from our extended family and friends. Our life has shrunk to the size of our individual homes. During this difficult time, it is important to find a silver lining. We have been given the opportunity to take a step back and notice the beauty that surrounds us. The beautiful bright sunrise, the gorgeous colors of a sunset (no two are alike), the birds singing, the flowers blooming, the trees changing colors with their colorful autumn leaves crunching under our feet, the days getting shorter and the evenings getting longer. Mother Nature is truly beautiful and she has transformed herself during this pandemic. Those of us who have taken this opportunity to awaken to our surroundings have also been renewed. It's more vital than ever to pay attention to the everyday blessings that are so easy to take for granted.

In 1918, the world lived through another pandemic – the Spanish Flu. At that time, the US population was 103 million and 675,000 people in the US died over a two-year span. 50 million people died worldwide. If you look at photos taken during that timeframe, there were lines of people wearing masks just as we are today. My husbands' grandmother gave birth to his mother in 1918 during the Spanish Flu pandemic, and because of her good health and safety practices, my family is alive today. I encourage all of you to practice good safety: wear a mask, wash your hands, keep social distancing. As all the ads state, face masks protect you and others. This is medical science, not a political issue. It's the responsible thing to do for your family and everyone else.

Though the world may seem wobbly, we can steady ourselves by focusing on things for which we are thankful. I am thankful for first responders, essential personnel, healthcare workers, and teachers. I am thankful for the beautiful outdoors. I am thankful for family and friends I've connected with during this pandemic, and for the new friends I've gained. I feel closer to my best friends. I am thankful for all the love in my life and especially for my family.

WHAT ARE YOU THANKFUL FOR?

Don't forget to **VOTE** on **November 3rd** if you are voting in person. If you are voting by mail-in ballot, **it's too late to send by mail. You need to drop it in a ballot box near you no later than 8pm Tuesday Nov. 3rd.** This is the most consequential election of a lifetime. **STAND AND BE COUNTED** regardless of whom you vote for.

To find a Ballot Box near you go to: <https://www.elections.maryland.gov/elections/2>