



## ***Thanksgiving Proclamation 1947 by Massachusetts Governor Robert Bradford***

**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**, By His Excellency ROBERT F. BRADFORD  
Governor A PROCLAMATION 1947

**In the year 1623 the tiny Plymouth Colony** was in dire peril. Facing the little settlement was the black wilderness of an unknown continent. Behind lay the stark horizon of the open sea. During the first winter half the people had died. Those who survived lived to endure what to the end of their days they were always to remember as "the starving time." No fresh supplies worthy of the name came to them from overseas. The slender store of food they had was shared with stragglers from outposts along the coast and with the Indians. Their spring planting was a failure, and what little corn had grown was parched by drouth and lay like withered hay.

**"In this great distrese,"** wrote their governor, William Bradford, *"they sett a parte a solemne day of humilliation, to seek the Lord by humble & fervente prayer. And He was pleased to give them a gracious & speedy answer .... For all the morning, and greatest part of the day it was clear weather & very hotte ... yet toward evening it begane ... to raine with such sweete and gentle showers as gave them cause of rejoyceing & blesing God. It came, without either wind, or thunder or any violence, and by degreese in that abundance, as that the earth was thorowly wete and soked therwith ... and afterwards the Lord sent them such seasonable showers, with enterchange of faire wrme weather, as ... caused a fruitfull & liberall harvest. ... For which mercie (in time conveniente) they also sette aparte a day of Thanksgiving."*

**This was the setting.** And the first Thanksgiving Day was in solemn gratitude to God for the mercy of bare survival. Three hundred years and more have passed. The little colony has become a great Commonwealth. And today, echoing through our thoughts, must be these other words from that older time: *"Thus out of smalle beginnings greater things have been produced by His hand that made all things of nothing, and gives being to all things that are; and as one small candle may light a thousand, so the light here kindled hath shone to many, yea in some sorte to our whole nation."*

**Today our sense of survival** may not seem as close or immediate. Yet we too face a wilderness, a strange, new wilderness of ideas, of science, of purpose. We cannot drive from our minds the consciousness that men, women, and children in the lands of the Old World from which all of our people originally came are starving today. With them, as in "the starving time" of the Plymouth Colony, it is a question of bare survival. Through the centuries the need for sharing and the spirit of humility remain unchanged.

**In this spirit,** I, Robert F. Bradford, Governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, do hereby set apart as a day of THANKSGIVING AND PRAYER Thursday, November 27, 1947 and urge that our people, assembled on that day in places of worship and in their homes, give thanks to God for the happiness of sharing with others the blessings He has so bountifully bestowed upon us.

**Given at the Executive Council in Plymouth,** this nineteenth day of November, in the year of our Lord one thousand nine hundred and forty-seven, and of the Independence of the United States of America, the one hundred and seventy-second. By His Excellency the Governor, ROBERT F. BRADFORD. Frederic W. Cook, Secretary of the Commonwealth. God Save The Commonwealth of Massachusetts."