

NOT ALL ARE EQUAL AT THANKSGIVING



Bill Donohue comments on the way Thanksgiving is received:

A Pew Research Center survey released yesterday found that Thanksgiving has more meaning for Christians than any other segment of the population. For example, 78 percent of the public reports feeling a strong sense of gratitude at least once a week. The figure for Christians is 82 percent; of those who belong to non-Christian faiths, the figure is 73 percent; only 62 percent of atheists feel this way.

Similarly, 90 percent of those who attend religious services at least weekly feel a strong sense of gratitude at least once a week; 89 percent of those who pray daily feel the same way. Yet for those who seldom or never pray, and for those who don't believe in God, the figure in both cases is 58 percent.

Does this matter? Yes. For one thing, a sense of gratitude is tied to happiness: the social science literature on this subject, which is extensive, clearly shows that believers are much happier than non-believers.

The results of other surveys consistently reveal that gratitude is strongly tied to altruism. For instance, those who report habitually experiencing gratitude engage in more prosocial, or self-giving, behaviors than those who experience gratitude less often. Other studies have found that gratitude stimulates helping others even when it is costly to the helper. In short, those who possess this virtue make for

better citizens.

So while Thanksgiving may be celebrated by everyone, some are more equal than others in experiencing its joys. We can surely be grateful about that.