

I received this from C. Bennett today (11/27/08). Brother Bennett retired from our Police Department to become Chief of Police in another Virginia city. He is now Senior Police Advisor to the Pakistani police.

Brother Bennett is a member of Metropolitan (Masonic) Lodge #11.

Thursday, November 27, 2008 (Thanksgiving Day)

Dear Friends,

A happy and blessed Thanksgiving to you from all of us here in Pakistan!

This Thanksgiving will be undoubtedly the most meaningful of my life, since I now have clearly seen the many blessings that we have in our country and society. The country and society is far from perfect, as it is composed of mere mortals. But what I have seen these last eight months makes me thankful every day to be a citizen of the United States of America, and from a society that (again imperfectly) respects the individual, believes in representative and responsive government, and respects human rights. We strive to give each person, regardless of religion, family history, country of origin, or their wealth and power, a fair chance at freedom and success.

We can expect to live to be older than 52. Fifty percent of our children won't die in their first year of life. We are not attacked and killed for our beliefs. If we visit a hotel, we are not blown to pieces by a suicide bomber. Our country and society strives to respect women. We are not married off against our will. We help people who are not like us. We have enough to eat. The electricity doesn't go off for no reason a dozen times a day. When it is hot, we are cooled. When it is cold, we are warmed. We try to be courteous to each other. We stand in line and wait our turn. We generally obey the traffic laws. We pick up our trash.

Our citizens have clean water. While we complain about our health and dental care system, its accessibility and its cost; most people in Pakistan have neither of these, and if they are somehow fortunate enough to see a doctor or a dentist they have a good chance of contracting Hepatitis C or AIDS.

And we generally feel safe. Yes, there is crime and disorder, but nothing like what so many in the rest of the world experiences every day. Thailand, India and Pakistan just today are in the grip of terrorism. For people in Pakistan, just going to the market or walking on the street, or going to work may be the last thing they do.

We all need to give thanks for the competent, dedicated and compassionate police in the United States. Police are frequently castigated for their excesses and failures, but the reason these incidents make front-page news is because they are so unique and infrequent. We live in a county where the rule of law is strong and the police respect and defend that. You cannot imagine what it is like here for the citizens. They are amazed and envious of our justice system and our police. This is also the case for firefighters and EMT's and other emergency service personnel. There is nothing like these here in Pakistan.

So if you get a chance, say "Thank you!" to those who protect us and keep us safe. After being here, I more fully realize what a blessing they are!

So for all of this, and so much more, taking one day a year to thank God for all our bounty and blessings is, I believe, a good thing.

While those of us working for peace and safety here in Pakistan are far away from you today, we feel particularly close to our country and home. Again, a happy and blessed Thanksgiving to all.

C. Bennett
Islamabad, Pakistan