

Living the Word

Psalm 23

The most well-known psalm of them all? These beautiful lines show us both the frailty of the psalmist, with his insistence that God will look after him seeming like an utter dependence upon the Lord, and at the same time, his sheer faith. On occasion, our faith in God might get hurled at us as an insult, a perceived weakness. For some, intellect might be called into question: "how can you believe that, you're so educated?" Attempting to fight back against these claims invariably leads to hurt, although we must be prepared to defend the faith. Our faith might well be bolstered by the prospect of the Lord shepherding us wherever we are. For all of us, remembering that we are not abandoned by God is the first step towards being able to defend our faith in Him, and to proclaim Christ crucified. May we never lose sight of the heavenly home which awaits us.

Prayers to Remember

Eternal God,
you crown the year with your goodness
and you give us the fruits of the earth in their season:
grant that we may use them to your glory,
for the relief of those in need and for our own well-being;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Collect for Harvest Thanksgiving, Common Worship.

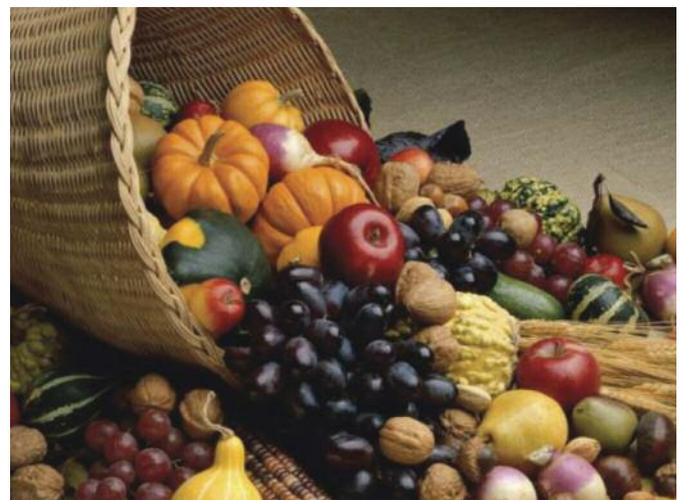
O Sing unto the Lord

It is said that the modern tradition of celebrating Harvest Festival in churches began in 1843 when the Reverend Robert Hawker invited parishioners to a special thanksgiving service at his church at Morwenstow in Cornwall. The tradition of Harvest celebrations goes back to the earliest pagan observances, with the 'Harvest Home' or 'Harvest Supper' long pre-dating the church celebrations. Nonetheless, the church celebrations soon became very popular and resulted in many wonderful hymns being written for the occasion. One hymn that is in danger of being forgotten is *To thee, O Lord, our hearts we raise*, written in 1863 by the prolific Anglican hymn writer William Chatterton Dix (1837-1898). Dix attended Bristol Grammar School and then worked for a marine insurance firm in Glasgow but devoted his life to hymn writing. The hymn moves from a vision of the actual harvest, based on Psalm 65 (traditionally sung at Evensong on Harvest Festival), to a description of a heavenly harvest - the 'bread of life' in St John's Gospel. The hymn concludes with a vision of the eternal kingdom based on the Book of Revelation. The usual tune is *Golden Sheaves*, written for the words by Sir Arthur Sullivan, best known for his comic operas written in partnership with W.S. Gilbert.

11th October
2020

The Eighteenth
Sunday after Trinity
28th Sunday
of the Year

The Great Feast



There are two parables in today's Gospel. First of all, we hear of a king who sends out his servants with invitations for a great feast. The invitation is refused, some are too occupied with the affairs of life, others react violently, provoking a similar response by the king. The invitations are then readdressed to those 'at the crossroads', that is, to anyone whom the servants can find, and the hall is filled with guests. Feasting and celebration are recurrent themes and symbols of God's blessing in the scriptures. Yet here the second story brings us up short. The King observes the guests, and notices one without a wedding garment, whose fate is not to share in a great feast, but the bondage of darkness. These are strange stories, that St Matthew presents with an element of shock treatment, for our response to the invitation requires the spiritual attitude of the robe of righteousness. As St Benedict writes in his Rule, just as there is an evil zeal of bitterness, which separates from God and leads to hell, so there is a good zeal which separates from vices and leads to God and to life everlasting.

