

Harvest

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Almighty God,
you crown your year with goodness
and give us the fruits of the earth in their season:
grant that we may use them to your glory,
and the relief of those in need
and for our own well-being.

Our text may be found in Paul's second letter to the church at Corinth, chapter 9
and verse 6

'the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly,
and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.'

Harvest Festival. That time of year when we remember to thank God for his goodness; to thank Him for the rich harvest, for enough food to eat, for the good order of a good world where what is sown is, in due time, harvested.

As a boy, I was brought up in London. There, to the east of the city, I grew up in an urban landscape. True, we had a small front garden with a privet hedge and there was a back garden with a gooseberry bush and an apple tree. There was Plashet Park and Wanstead Flats but largely I grew up in streets of terraced houses, a high street of shops, in the shadow of Monega Road primary school and

within hearing of the enthusiastic shouts of the crowd if a goal was scored at West Ham's ground at the Boleyn in Upton Park.

At my primary school, we followed the rhythms of a normal year: Christmas, Easter, the summer holidays, Harvest, Hallowe'en, Guy Fawkes' Night, then back to Christmas. To mark the fact of harvest, when we were so far removed from the rural environment from where our food largely came, was a timely reminder that there was more to life than the place in which I was living.

Now I live here in France and I'm gifted with a myriad of stalls in the Dinard market and by the rich variety of fresh fruit and vegetables, fresh meat and fish, at the relatively new Hyper Intermarché on the edge of town. So I am grateful that, here at this time, we can enjoy the fruit of those who labour to provide the food we can buy to feed ourselves.

But this year at Harvest tide, let's reflect for a moment on a different sort of harvest: the harvest of a life well lived. What have we got to be thankful for? Our family, our friends, our home, the jobs we once did, then retiring to live here in France, being part of a community and part of our church. What have we got to be thankful for: for people and places; for being alive, awake, aware of what is going on around us; for the chance to give and to receive. And when you look back over a life well lived, what will you be grateful for?

And the secret of the good life may be found in what Paul writes to the church at Corinth and which is our harvest text today:

**‘the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly,
and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.’**

If you put in sufficient time and effort, there is a reward to be gained. For me personally, one small example was learning to swim back in February 2012, since when I am fitter and healthier for the time I spend in the pool.

So today, at this Harvest Festival here at St Bart’s, let me leave you with this simple thought: that as you sow so shall you reap and the fruits of a good life are what you can do for others and what you allow them to do for you.

Will you; can you ?

I have spoken in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
Amen.

Preached at the Eucharist

St Bartholomew’s, Dinard

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