

ST ANDREW'S CHURCH

GRAFHAM

'THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK'

12th August 2020

Last Sunday we observed Lammastide at St Andrew's. The origins of our Lammas celebrations lie deep within Biblical history. In the book of Leviticus the people of Israel are commanded to offer the first sheaf of corn to God. In Deuteronomy they are told to bring the first fruits as an offering to God in remembrance of his generosity and faithfulness in bringing them out of Egypt and providing for them in the wilderness.

At St Andrew's we still have our local connections to the land and so were able to bring bread baked with grain from Whitley Manor Farm to church. Nevertheless it started me thinking more widely about what we offer to God and especially about 'first fruits'.

At Harvest Thanksgiving we know what we have got and our offering to God is made out of our richness. By then we may be thinking that we know what we can spare. At Lammas we don't know what the harvest is going to be like - there might not be much more. So we give in faith, putting our trust in God. All too often in life we are tempted to give things to God last; to give him what is left over; even perhaps to give him what we no longer want. Churches can easily become the repositories for things of dubious quality that people no longer want in their homes! Many of us give generously of our money, our time and our energy to a number of causes but where on our list of priorities does the church come? And then what about our giving of ourselves to God? Do we fit God into odd corners of our lives or is spending time with him on a regular basis an important part of our daily routine?

What about those 'first fruits'? I don't think they need to be restricted to material and tangible things. They can be our talents, our skills, our ideas, our hopes and dreams, our barely formed longings - and even our disappointments, the things that haven't quite worked. Sometimes we may be hesitant to offer things to God before they are fully formed or perfected. Ruth Burgess from the Iona Community recalls her father patiently eating his way through her sometimes dubious offerings from school cookery lessons, and imagines God being equally brave when he asks for the first fruits of whatever our harvest may be. Sometimes in our desire to give of our best we fail to give at all. Nothing is 'not good enough' if it is given with honesty, integrity and love. How many parents tell their offspring to bring their picture back when it is up to the standard of the Old Masters? Sometimes we may think that we have to do something in our own strength. Then we tell God about it later, imagining that he only wants to hear about our successes (never our failures). We don't think that what he really might have wanted to do is share in the process - the good bits and the not so good bits - for us to be co-creators together.

As I was thinking about this 'Thought for the Week', I remembered a poem also by Ruth Burgess:

The First Fruits

When I bring you the first fruits
you get what you get:
you get my energy,
my imagination,
my scribbling,
my experimentation,
my dreams,
you get the raw me.

Part of me would prefer to bring you
the finished article:
the tried and tested formula,
the buffed and polished carving,
the machine that I know will work.
But that is not what you ask for;
because you want to be with me in the making,
in the messiness,
the uncertainty,
the laughter and the pain.

God of the first fruits,
here I am.
Come and work with me always.

*From Bare Feet and Buttercups
(Wild Goose Publications)*

What might we bring to God today?

With my love and prayers

Camilla

*If you would like to discuss anything in this or any other of our mailings do get in touch.
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