



## 17<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity 2021, Harvest Festival

### 8.30am BCP Holy Communion

I must admit, Harvest Festivals leave me cold. Perhaps, being a suburban boy, they just never connected with me? What's your relationship with Harvest Festivals? Childhood and now?

But despite my lack of enthusiasm for terrible songs like 'cauliflowers fluffy' and my positive *loathing* for 'All Things Bright and Beautiful', despite the fact that I really can't get excited about courgettes and ornamental gourds... the Harvest Festivals has, at its core, a potentially *life-changing* and *life-saving* truth.

And I don't just mean the hundreds of women supported by the Church Army's Marylebone Project to whom our Harvest offering from the our church and schools go each year; although that too, of course. Today's Epistle points the way.

St Paul riffs again and again on the unity we have in Baptism, the oneness of our being in the person and life of the Risen Jesus. We are *one*. And not in a naff O2 mobile 'phone ad' campaign kind of way. This is the real thing. We *are* one.

All the baptized, all of humanity, all of creation is being made one in God, through Jesus. St Paul is right. St Paul is speaking radically and philosophically about the nature of our being.

Not just our *choices*, not even just our *identity*, but our actual ontology (our very *being*). And we see the fruits of this new creation again and again in Jesus' ministry – He breaks down barriers, He restores people to the communal sharing of life and faith in society. He makes people at home with themselves, each other and God - always steps towards His ultimate work of making us whole: whole people, wholly at one with all creation, wholly at one with God forever. Do you see how these little steps of Jesus (like those divisions He overcomes in today's Gospel) are feeding into the bigger picture of what God is doing then and now?

But 'cauliflowers fluffy' and 'plough the fields and scatter' might seem a long way from this vision our cosmic destiny... but we'd be missing the point. Each year the Harvest Festival, teaches us how connected we really are. We are, in some faltering ways *already one*. Our food and water, our clothing and possessions, our history, language, culture and life doesn't come from plastic packages on the shelves of sterile supermarkets, or the Netflix icon on a tablet – that's just their last stop before us. They come from people and communities in every corner of the world. One of the most dangerous mistakes we ever made was to build systems in life that obscure the reality of the *people* and *places* with whom we are connected.

I will never meet the person who made my shirt today. I am poorer for that, but that never, ever excuses me from ensuring that that person has a decent wage and safe place to live and work. We are connected, one story, one family.

When shallow ideas bounce around social media echo chambers, when increasingly deaf and angry social commentators get further and further into the corners they have made for themselves and each other, shouting all the while, we are in trouble.

The Christian Harvest festival each year reminds us that we are siblings under God – always connected, however much it may suit the great and powerful in business to pretend that we're not. We are one family under one God, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one Spirit, called into one body (*Christ's*) by whom and with whom and in whom are God's promises and our hopes fulfilled.

Think of all the things that divide us? Politics, views, oceans and walls and borders, inequality of resources, wealth and class, thousands of miles and social realities, insecurities, fears, whatever they are... On the first Easter Day Jesus destroyed the power of *death* – the *ultimate* division has been torn down (that between life and death), all *other* divisions will fall in its wake when Jesus comes again.

Which barriers are you and I leaning on? Which are we hiding behind or propping up? The celebration of Harvest festival and the key teachings of our Faith expressed in the readings given for today are asking us to look again, and having seen them for what they are, tear them down.