



OCTOBER PASTORAL LETTER

Margaret writes:

After the hottest summer on record, we are all settling into the season of Autumn with the start of shorter days to come and the welcome rain.

The end of September saw us celebrating in our church services, all that is good from those long Spring and Summer days, as some of us bustled away in our gardens and allotments growing flowers and vegetables. It was a challenge to say the least, much watering had to be done, and the bugs kept at bay, and maybe the yield was a little disappointing due to the lack of rain, especially those root vegetables.

Yet many have had bumper crops of tomatoes, cucumbers, courgettes etc... While my Bramley apple tree produced its best crop ever, but I had to harvest them early before the birds got to them. Yet I look forward to getting out there to gather in the abundance of blackberries that are adorning the hedgerows around, so that I can make our much-loved black berry and apple crumble.

Sadly, our farmers had had a tough harvest. Yes, they could get the crops in with the dry land and the long hot summer days, but the yield was poor due to lack of rain in the Spring. The next challenge that they are now facing is being able to cultivate the land for the next season of crops, because the ground is too hard.

Autumn is well known for being the season of the last harvests before the winter months set in. Whether its corn in the fields, fruit from orchards or produce from garden and allotments. Hence our freezers, cupboards and tables become evidence of God's fantastic creation of abundance and the hard work and ingenuity of human hands. Because of this we celebrate a season of gratitude and feasting, exemplified by our Harvest Festival services.

Dorothy Day an out-spoken American journalist and social activist who became Catholic when she was 30 in 1972 once said:

'Food for the body is not enough; there must be food for the soul'.

As Christians we are called not only to harvest and celebrate the fruits of our produce but also the Fruits of the Spirit. In his letter to the Galatians Paul recalls these fruits for us:

But the Fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no other law.
Galatians 5. 22-23

Harvesting the Fruits of the Spirit is not limited to any one season of the year or life, but is a harvest for all seasons, indeed a harvest for every day.

As we are all aware from cultivating crops, it is very hard work and for us to gain the Fruits of the Spirit it is a similar process. We need to plough up the hardness in our hearts to become tender and responsive, plant the Word of God into ourselves, patiently wait and be tested, resist the old, negative responses and finally we harvest joy, patience, peace etc...

What could be better for us than a life full of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness gentleness, faithfulness, goodness and self-control? It would be heaven on earth if everyone had these qualities highly cultivated in their hearts.

Fruits of the Spirit are even more attractive when someone shows love, patience or kindness towards another, it's wonderful. These qualities can create lasting bonds between people. But even more importantly, these are the inherent qualities of God, demonstrated powerfully to us through the life of Jesus. He attracted crowds of people just by exhibiting these qualities, especially during the most difficult of circumstances.

As we live our lives in the world, the fragrance the appearance of our fruit attracts others. Someone might ask how you can be so loving to one that is unlovable, or so patient in a difficult situation.

Without these magnificent qualities of God, we could not last a day. They are there to harvest every day of the year, every day of our lives. They are accessible to all no matter where we are in our lives, difficult times or ordinary times. They are there ready to harvest when we are ready to read and listen God's word, discern that word in our hearts and act upon it.

