

Dear Friends,

Some lines from a poem by Elizabeth Barrett Browning always have a special resonance for me at Harvest time. Here they are:

Earth's cramm'd with heaven
And every common bush afire with God
But only he who sees takes off his shoes.

There's an obvious reference there to the story of Moses and the burning bush, but more widely, the point that the poet is trying to make is that what we see depends upon how we look. The way scientists look at the world finds different truths from the way historians look at it. Other different truths are found by the way poets look, for example, and the way the world is seen through the eyes of faith is different too. And that is important at this season.

Harvest is about food. And generally the way food is viewed in our culture is increasingly as a commodity. That is not how it is seen through the eyes of faith. We see food as God's sustaining and life-giving gift; something to add savour to life, something to enjoy, something to create and extend fellowship, something that, by its use in a service like this, helps us to appreciate the divine, the sacred in life. In other words, it is something that helps us to see the burning bush, and invites us to take off our shoes.

And this is not just airy-fairy poetry. When food is seen as a commodity, its chief value is seen in its being traded. When it is seen as God's gift, its value is in its being eaten – in its being seen first and foremost as food. Where the world looks for efficiency, the religious community looks for justice for farmers and respect for cattle husbandry. Where the world looks for productivity, the religious community looks for a proper respect for the fragile links and balances of the environment. Where the world looks for

profit, the religious community looks for fair trade, and a just and equal sharing of the things that earth affords. It looks for gratefulness and humility. Where the world looks for market-savvy, the religious community looks for wisdom. These alternatives have huge repercussions in the way we live, the political systems we support and the way we view the world.

These are not specifically Christian insights. They are shared with many other religions, though they are certainly Christian beliefs. That can be seen as a good or a bad thing. Some people rejoice to find common ground with other religions in a quest for greater understanding and common purpose to change the world for good. Others feel it dilutes the specific Christian message and aligns us with people who don't eat pigs and cows. Though actually it has to be pointed out, that many Christians are among those who do not eat meat at all, and for those who do, within our culture we too have taboos. Most of us, for example have recently made it clear that we do not eat horse.

The whole debacle about the horsemeat scandal emphasises the point. How can it be right for one ready meal to be assembled in four different countries, with dubious controls on quality or good practice. How fortunate we are in Cyprus to be able to eat food as food that has travelled such a short distance, and we might dare to hope, has been produced by people who are nearer the religious than the commercial perspective

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But only he who sees takes off his shoes.

Join us to do just that (metaphorically) in our Harvest service this year.

John Holdsworth Parish Priest / Chaplain

Forthcoming Events for St Helena's

October 6 Back to Church Sunday. This is a special guest service for which invitations have been issued. If you haven't had one, consider yourself invited anyway. The service begins at 9.30

October 12 The Island Wide Church Gathering and Archdeacon's Visitation will be held at St Barnabas Church Limassol at 2. All welcome.

October 13 Harvest Festival Our service begins at 9.30. Gifts of food will be distributed to local institutions including the St John the Merciful Home, and added to our food bank. All are welcome to this annual service.

October 26 – 31 Partner Diocese Gathering We shall be hosting partners from Thika in Kenya and Exeter in the UK, as well as from the Gulf area of our own Diocese. Our service at 9.30 will be followed by a parish presentation and then a bring and share lunch in the Upper Room. Please do get involved in this.

November 6 Luncheon Club restarts This is a monthly gathering of anyone who would like to share a midweek meal together. The cost for a two course meal is €5. We meet in the Upper Room from 12.30. Names should be given in advance to Liz Taylor or by ringing the Chaplain 24651327.

November 10 Remembrance Sunday We observe the UK date of this event which is always poignant. In it we remember all who have died or suffered as a result of war, whoever they are. The service begins at 9.30 and includes two minutes silence.

All are welcome to all our events and services

St Helena's Anglican Church Larnaca



Harvest Pastoral Letter 2013