

St Peter's, Ealing
Sunday 4th October 2014

Harvest Sunday (Family Service)

Harvest is a time of celebration, thanksgiving and hope. And this harvest is no different. Today we are celebrating. We are celebrating the Centenary of our Guide Company, 4th Ealing. Formed in October 1914 this Company has always been part of St Peter's life. Girls and young women of the parish have been part of their comradeship, friendship and service to the community as well as to each other. They have continued for 100 years to share in an organisation that has encouraged good citizenship, a sense of community and belonging. So, well done 4th Ealing and here is to the next 100 years.

It is of course also a time for celebrating the harvest. Though city dwellers we rely on good harvest to ensure our shops and supermarkets are stocked with good, affordable food. It has been argued over the years that celebrating harvest in an urban community is a nonsense. But it is good to remember not only where our food comes from but the people who work on the land to bring us carrots and cabbages and sweet corn and all the other lovely stuff that makes living good.

It is time too to celebrate the mere fact we have homes, roofs over our heads and beds to sleep in. To celebrate the fact that we are safe and well. It is a temptation to think this is crowing about our good fortune when really it is about making sure we don't take what we have for granted, that there are those around us who are worse off and should be the focus of our care and attention.

We give thanks today for the many blessings of life. For food and homes and friends and family. We give thanks for the example of our Uniformed Organisations that care for and nurture our youth, encouraging them to share in the life and welfare of our community, to be stronger, better members of society.

We give thanks for the bringing in of a safe harvest. We give thanks for creation, that nurturer of all things that is the beauty and glory that is around us, from the exotic creatures of the rain forest to the warmth of the sun and the beauty of an autumn leaf.

It is a time when we can stop and give thanks for family and friends. Thanks for the love and support they offer, for the ways in which they enhance our life and makes more than we are.

It is a time for hope. Hope that is full and meaningful. Hope that we can offer to others through the gifts and blessings we have received. That hope we offer bringing comfort to the poor and those in need. Shown in our generous gifts we will bring up to the altar. The hope offered the homeless women who seek shelter at the Church Army Marylebone Centre; hope offered to those who are finding it increasingly difficult to manage and put food on the table as we bring food and sustenance for the Ealing Food Bank. Hope we can offer to those whose lives are blighted by pour water and sanitation through the collection we will make at the end of the service for Water Aid. The hope we will be able to offer here at St Peter's over the winter buy housing 14 homeless people as part of the Ealing Churches Winter Night Shelter.

All these things come together at Harvest.

There is of course more to this. In celebrating 4th Ealing, Creation, the gift of food and shelter, of jobs and support, of giving in time and gifts we also remember the place of God in the scheme of life. Recognising that it is from God we have the blessing of creation. That sustenance is from God. That God, in all his power showers love and blessing upon us, whether we notice it or not. We give thanks that in his Son Jesus we know God's love for us, in that while we are still sinners Jesus died for us. That through his rising from the dead God's love and grace is declared for all of us, if only we will open our hearts to God. Today, and every day we can celebrate the hope God gives us that life is not futile, that we can help and support each other, that the gifts we have can and should be shared, that Jesus teachers us to love one another, to clothe the poor, feed the hungry and visit the prisoner.

As we gather around the altar to share in the bread and wine of the holy Eucharist we give thanks for the love of God that changes us and renews us as part of his creation. In the broken bread and wine out poured we recognise Gods love for all of us and a renewed by the power of the Holy Spirit to serve God in one another.