



October 2020

Revd John writes:



‘Poverty or Plenty!’

The poetry of John Betjeman has amused and entertained me for many years. One of my favourite Betjeman poems is entitled ‘The Diary of a Church Mouse’. In it the mouse in question explains how he lives on scraps for most of the year, but there is one occasion when things really improve – not Christmas, nor Easter – but Harvest Festival! The autumn harvest offers him a wealth of produce in the church and he is able to really indulge himself as he gorges on the harvest loaf and other goodies. Yet he still finds time to complain that he has to share this bounty with other creatures, who only turn up at Harvest time!

Betjeman concludes his verse with a dig at us humans:

‘For human beings only do what their religion tells them to.
They read the bible every day and always, night and morning, pray;
and just like me, the good church mouse, worship each week in
God’s own house,
but all the same it’s strange to me how very full the church can be
with people I don’t see at all except at Harvest Festival!’

This year has however been a little different; with the Covid restrictions in place numbers able to attend worship were limited and we were not able to sing the Harvest hymns we love so well. Though we were able to decorate the church, the display was somewhat muted compared to normal. Furthermore we could not collect gifts of produce for the benefit of the local foodbank.

The paucity of our own Harvest celebrations is reflected in the world around us too. Local farmers have had a poor harvest as a result not only of the Coronavirus, but also as a consequence of the weather. A



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very dry summer following a really soggy spring is not the best climatic recipe for good yields.

Charities have also had a poor 'harvest' this year, as fundraising events have been cancelled and giving has been reduced as we have moved through the Covid crisis – and the threat of a second wave will only make matters worse.

It is easy to give thanks to God when we have plenty – as most of us who attend church week by week do; a challenge hinted at by Betjeman too. But is it enough just to turn up and give thanks for God's love? Or do we need to express that love in action too? Is not the church sometimes guilty of not thinking enough about our brothers and sisters at home and throughout the world?

In my time in this parish – I have been delighted at the way folk have responded to Harvest appeals, and how both churches have increased their commitment to giving to good causes throughout the year. So can I urge you not to let up, because our income is down our tithed giving as a church will be reduced.

The PCC have launched a special Harvest appeal to support some of our favourite charities – 'Bridge Trust', 'Leprosy Mission', Bishop of Rochester's 'Poverty and Hope' Appeal at St Martin's, Fegan's at Well Hill. Details can be found on the church website – will you consider an extra gift if you can, so they can enjoy a harvest to continue their good work.

Please give generously and with a smile for as St Paul reminds us in the Harvest time epistle 'God loves a cheerful giver' (2Corinthians 9:7).

Yours in Christ,

Reverend John.

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