

Assembly 12 October 2009

Harvest Festival

The Chaplain spoke to us last week about one of the lines from the Lord's Prayer that we say at every Assembly; *Give us this day our daily bread*. The timing of the Rev. Martin's address fitted in well with the Church Calendar.

Yesterday, in Christian churches around the world, congregations celebrated Harvest Festival. Harvest Festival marks the time of year when the annual crops have been safely harvested and stored. Of course, the time of the year and the crops involved will vary depending on the location. In the Northern Hemisphere, harvest festivals are held in early October; when the crops that were sown in spring are harvested at the end of summer or in early autumn. This time of year corresponds to the autumnal equinox, which is why in China the harvest is celebrated by the Moon Festival.

The timing of the harvest is critical, for the crops must be reaped well before the onset of winter. Harvest Festival is therefore a time of thanks. It is the time to thank God for the food that he has given us. A famous hymn in the Christian tradition, written in 1844, expresses the importance of harvest for the common person. The first verse of hymn 289 is:

*Come, ye thankful people, come,
Raise the song of harvest-home!
All is safely gathered in,
Ere the winter storms begin;
God, our Maker, doth provide
For our wants to be supplied;
Come to God's own temple, come;
Raise the song of harvest-home!*

The delivery of a bountiful harvest is essential to sustaining life in many parts of the world. In nations where agriculture means the difference between life and death, harvest takes on added significance. It is important that we remember the calamities that have taken place in recent weeks in the Philippines, Indonesia, Samoa and Tonga, where not only have many people lost their lives, but also much of the harvest has been destroyed.

It is timely for us to remember how fortunate we are to live in Hong Kong. We live in a society where the supply of food is not a matter of daily survival for the majority and where we give little thought to the annual harvest. As members of a Christian school, however, we should always remember the needs of others less fortunate than ourselves. Harvest festival is the time of year for us to say "thank you" to God for the food that he has provided.

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