

Should we do this, or shall we make a change this year? It seems to me that there has been some such discussion about Harvest Festival in urban settings for as long as I can remember. Always the discussion ends, as it has done this year with agreement that we will keep Harvest Festival. Although we know the Victorian origins of this rural festival, we need not be locked in to its original meanings.

There is a simple reason for this. It is that at the very heart of Christianity is the need for thanksgiving. It is what our word eucharist means. At the Last Supper before the special prayers, Our Lord gave thanks – and so do we.

Thanksgiving is not an idea lightly offered. Our eucharist remembers also sacrifice and suffering before a final resurrection joy.

It fits so well to where we are today. There is indeed much suffering but on this particular Sunday we match it in thanksgiving for some surprising fruits. I mean for us the fruits which have been offered in many ways since we are unable to worship together in church.

Ben's recordings and online marvels set a baseline and a high standard for us all to attain in what we offer.

The Friday mailing has given opportunity for many voices to be heard. In those individual voices we have been given the privilege of sharing the fruit of individual spirituality. We have heard of favourite paintings, of special piece of poetry, of how art works can be created.

The Holy Dusters share garden photos and email messages every Friday

We have met by Zoom, shared experiences, made our comments and in their Zoom meetings your clergy and Readers have planned and organised our worship. Today our St Olaves Zoom singers will remind us of our need for heavenly food.

Most importantly, so many people have kept in contact, and shared concerns by telephone.

In all this, individuals with some or little knowledge of one-another have come together to form a renewed community.

Part of my re-reading has been Martin Thornton's 'English Spirituality'. In it he traces or worship from Augustine, Benedict, Mother Julian, Richard Rolle and many others to where we are now. He draws it together with one big idea which became more prevalent from the Reformation onwards; Common Prayer. Not an attachment to any one form of Anglican prayer book – but the emphasis is on the word 'Common' That we can escape from hierarchies of priestcraft and holiness and each share our Common worship in our own homes. That is just what, in the main we have been

doing over these last few months – it is of the essence of Anglicanism linked when possible with the reception of the food of the angels.

I could say all this in another and perhaps more memorable way. What a fuss before the Last night of the Proms about whether or not to sing Rule Britannia! I watched it and did not mind one way or the other. What did hit me was the inclusion of ‘You’ll never walk alone. I think it might in these times of trouble where we are inventing new types of community this is becoming our anthem and our theme song.

So, thanks for the YouTube worship, thanks for the many opinions shared, thanks for the phone calls, on Harvest Festival Sunday, thanks for a new way of expressing our lockdown faith:

When you walk through a storm
Hold your head up high
And don't be afraid of the dark
At the end of a storm
There's a golden sky
And the sweet silver song of a lark
Walk on through the wind
Walk on through the rain
Though your dreams be tossed and blown
Walk on, walk on
With faith in your heart
And you'll never walk alone again.

That’s us, our St Olaves community – a renewed community of faith and hope and love.