

Living the Word: Philippians 4:4-9

Christian joy is found, ultimately, in the peace we find when our lives are deeply united to Jesus Christ. It is to be found in what in the West we call sanctification, or what the East calls divinization. Sanctification is a process through which we are gradually changed more and more into Christ's likeness through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The tools for this are prayer, thanksgiving, supplication, and also dwelling on the honourable, true, pure, and gracious things that come from God. And sanctification is the aim of apostolic teaching as well: the purpose of doing and proclaiming what was handed down to us is to stay in the closeness and joy of the God of peace. When we give thanks for the harvest we acknowledge that whatever we have in this life comes not from us but from God, and it is to him that we owe our thanks and praise. But God also desires our co-operation with him in caring for the earth and making sure it thrives and brings forth fruit. This is also true of the spiritual life: our sanctification ultimately happens through the closeness of God, but our co-operation is also needed. Let us follow the Apostle's advice so that our lives would yield more and more fruit in the Holy Spirit!

Elements of the Mass: The Offertory

It is often mistakenly thought that 'the offertory' before the Eucharistic Prayer at Mass is about money. True, this may be the point at which offerings of money have been collected from the people, and they in some sense represent our desire to offer ourselves to the Father in union with Christ. However, in essence, the offertory is the moment when the bread and wine (and water) to be consecrated are received on the altar. These are really the people's offerings: hence the modern revival of a custom that these elements are brought to the altar by a group of lay people. This is a moment which is often missed as the people may be singing an 'offertory hymn' which is a modern replacement for the offertory sentence, traditionally chanted whilst the gifts are being received. However, the Offertory is one of the key moments of the Mass, the first of the 'Eucharistic actions' following Christ who, as the gospels relate, 'took' bread/a chalice at the Last Supper before giving thanks over it. The actual reception of the elements onto the altar is followed by the ancient instruction (prob. 11th century): 'Pray brethren' and the 'Prayer over the gifts' asking God to accept our offering in union with that of Christ.

Harvest Thanksgiving



*All good gifts around us are sent
from heaven above*

Harvest Thanksgiving used to be an occasion of relief – relief that 'all is safely gathered in ere the winter storms begin', and that God had once again provided an abundance of good things. The world in which we live is, however, more complicated as our awareness of issues such as global poverty and complex social needs close to home impact upon our understanding of what we are to do in response to this God-given abundance. We are still thankful, of course we are – but can we be truly thankful if we have not first contributed to the needs of our brothers and sisters who have insufficient goods to meet their needs, whose harvests and crops perpetually fail, for whom life is constant struggle? There continues to be real poverty in many parts of the world, and in many cases on our own doorsteps. Today we mingle our thanksgiving for the harvest with the fervent prayers that God may open our eyes and hearts to his generosity, that we in turn may remember our calling to alleviate poverty wherever we may witness its effects.

Collect for Harvest Thanksgiving:

Eternal God, you crown the year with your goodness and you give us the fruits of the earth in their season: grant that we may use them to your glory, for the relief of those in need and for our own wellbeing; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Common Worship