



S'Marylebone  
Parish Church

## Harvest / Trinity 16 2020, 8.30am BCP Holy Communion

At this 8.30am Eucharist we use the Book of Common Prayer. You can tell because of the 'thees' and 'thous', and other give away clues too. The BCP (Book of Common Prayer) Eucharist has a different structure to the modern church services of the Western Church. Uniquely, the Prayer Book begins with the Our Father, it has the Confession in the middle, and it puts the *Gloria in Excelsis* at the end of the whole service.

### **The Prayer Book is an extraordinary document.**

For hundreds of years, this little book contained all the services of the Church, every day of the week and year of your life. Morning and Evening, Sundays, hatch, match and dispatch, everything. It is literally *Common Prayer* – **the prayers for everyone, for everything.**

It is also a **magnificent political project**: it moves the Latin of medieval Catholicism into English, preserving the truth of Catholic Christianity, and weaving in the new Protestant reformation theology to make a compromise that has stood the test of time.

It is also a work of **linguistic genius**. It is pure poetry. But more than that, the beautiful words form elegant rhythms and registers that do in us what the words are trying to say. They move our hearts to effect their intention ...

'We do not presume to come to this thy Table, O merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in thy manifold and great mercies. We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under thy Table. But thou art the same Lord, whose property is always to have mercy...' The words of the Prayer of Humble Access (also called 'Humble Crumble') begin to move in us the humility of our state and the lavish generosity of God.

They are also made to be naturally memorable. The words comfortably trip off your tongue: ‘Almighty God, unto whom all hearts be open, all desires known and from whom no secrets are hid...’. Those phrases running of the tongue like honey off a spoon - out as praise into the universe and back as treasure into the heart.

Learn these prayers. Let them become treasure in your heart for busy corridors between meetings or lessons, on the bus and round the kitchen table. *Then*, as St Paul says in today’s epistle ‘Christ may *dwell* in your hearts by faith; that ye may be rooted and grounded in love’.

And I say all that because today is Harvest. At Harvest we (1) give thanks for God’s gifts in creation, (2) share them with others, (3) return a thank offering to God, and (4) commit ourselves to care for creation.

And the Prayer Book gives us no special readings, and nowhere in the calendar does it have harvest. Today we had the Widow of Nain, and Christ raising her son to life – a beautiful and intimate foretaste of the Resurrection, but no seeds, or vines for us today...

For the Prayer Book to have Harvest would be like me having an annual ‘Gin day’ in my house. Nonsense. *Every* day is rooted in farming, harvest and seasons for the Prayer Book and the communities who have used it for centuries. *Every day* is a day of thanks-giving, sharing, offering to God, and caring for the gifts we have received in creation.

So perhaps that’s the lesson Harvest teaches us at this Book of Common Prayer Holy Communion? To not make these things a novel splash every now and then, but to live steeped (if not in gin) then in these deep truths. Two-fold: first to live steeped in the prayers God has given us in this amazing little book. To really have these liturgies and the truths they reveal as part of us, and how we live with ourselves, each other and God.

And, secondly, as part of that, to have thanksgiving, sharing, offering and caring as natural parts of who we are, as families and communities. Pick up a Book of Common Prayer online or in a charity shop in the next week. And let's challenge ourselves to do one or two practical things (establish a habit or two) to really make this two-fold invitation real for us: living the liturgy as a household somehow, and living the harvest.