A note from the Rectory

There is something rather elegiac about the later autumn months, we are now in November – as we enter winter there is a sadness to our surroundings, there is a dampness, gentle rain dripping from the yellowed leaves and fog veiling the landscape. Harvest Festivals are now completed in what has been a difficult year for farmers. We have given thanks for the bounty of nature, for the grain safely gathered. Now that the sails have been fully restored at the Wilton Windmill; the grinding of the grain will resume. In the modern world we often overlook the link between, harvest, grain and the bread we eat. In church it is in the breaking of bread we acknowledge the presence of God in what we eat, in the food that springs from the earth. This sense of wonder is summed up for me in a poem by the mystical thinker and writer, Evelyn Underhill. The poem reflects on the harvest, on the cycle of life and death, the seed torn from the fields, crushed and milled, the bread of life and then a sudden realisation of the glory of God,

A splendour burning in the heart of things:
The flame of living love which lights the law
Of mystic death that works the mystic birth.
I knew the patient passion of the earth,
Maternal, everlasting, whence there springs
The Bread of Angels and the life of man.

In November the seed lies dormant and we turn to memories. We remember the 5th, now it is a night for the excitement of fireworks; we little think of our Protestant roots and many may not even be aware that in Northern Ireland, fireworks take place at Hallowe'en. It is still too powerful a reminder of the struggle between Protestant and Catholic for foiling of the gun powder plot to be celebrated. Perhaps many have no idea what Bonfire night is about at all.

All Saints' day falls on the first of the month; we remember all the Saints, all those known and unknown, who died in the service of God. How many of us realise that it is on the eve of All Saints that we celebrate Hallowe'en, the night before All Hallows; All the Saints. On the day we remember All Souls and as usual this year there will be services to remember the "departed", known to and loved by us. We will have services of reflection to mark All Souls and invite those who may have lost loved ones in the past year or before – it is always a moving time, a time to be still and reflect to honour those we have loved and lost. Sunday 1st November 3pm Burbage, 6pm Collingbourne Ducis, 6pm Great Bedwyn.

Remembrance Day also falls in November. The eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month – how many know that it marks the signing of the armistice? As we gather round the memorials in our churches and churchyards, there can almost nobody who remembers the young men who died in France, who left this lovely corner of Wiltshire for fields of mud and filth. (Although I conducted a funeral for a lady, only a few years ago, who remembered her father returning from the war in 1918 and now knowing who he was). For some it was matter of duty, some no doubt did not choose to go, but many must have felt they were fighting for a way of life, for the way of life they loved.

We all need to remember that we are created, to reflect on the wonders of creation around us, to reflect on our uniqueness and at the same time learn to find that in others, to remember that we are nothing without those around us and our communities, albeit with different aims and ambitions but with many shared hopes and fears and to locate "the splendour burning at the heart of things). Church is a good place to re-connect with people, to remember our Christian heritage. The churches in the Savernake team are a varied group reflecting different eras of Christianity in these islands, formed from stones devoid of feeling; yet we breath life into them, it is the people that make them what they are. It is the way we share and honour each other that manifests God's presence with us. Let us remember that.

The Revd. Jonathan Meyer