

# DAILY BREAD

## “Grain of Hope : Slice of Heaven”

# LAMMAS

(Loaf-Mass *Hlaf-mas*)

### Lammas

Green-gold glint of olive oil, reed baskets  
Piled red with pomegranates; sound of a flute  
Approaching Temple Mount, followed by pilgrims  
Who bear first fruits: the feast of Bikkurim.

Rice-bowls prepared for the Buddha: grain heaps  
Swelling in the Acropolis: fruits blessed  
In a medieval mass, to be divided  
Between the Church and the always-hungry poor.

Lammas: loaf mass. That bread is made  
Of the first wheat, offered with sunflower, mint.  
A time to stop and give thanks: a year half-travelled  
Between the solstice and the equinox.

From the earliest times, an instinctive sense of gift,  
The wish to offer back, prayer for a future  
No human can control. Bikkurim  
Means ‘promise to come’. A spiritual language

We have eradicated with our fantasy  
Of total control, expelled with terms  
Like ‘mutation breeding’, ‘maximised yield’  
As ruthlessly as a herbicide kills wild flowers.

But now, at Lammas, with a world in shock  
At its sudden vulnerability, we might ask  
What will be the first fruits as we stumble  
Out of this dark into a twilight world?

What gifts of a changed spirit might we offer  
To our fellow-travellers on this fragile earth?  
How can we turn to the resurrected one  
Who has been called the first fruits of the dead?

Diane Pacitti, 2020

In the 70 years since the Green Revolution upended our paradigm of food production, world population has increased from 3 billion to just short of 8 billion, and rising. There is still plenty of food for all of us, and every reason to act out of abundance and a sense of gift rather than scarcity and fear. But throwing away 4.5 million tonnes of food annually in the UK is a perverse mis-construal of the dynamic of abundance. What might an alternative agricultural model of abundance look like?

Currently fossil-fuel derived pesticides are driving the extinction of vast swathes of insect life. What if we acknowledged our total dependence on other creatures and adopted organic farming methods on a large scale?

Since the 1950s more than half of British hedgerows, vital wildlife habitats, have been lost to make way for huge fields and machinery. What if we recalibrated our sense of agricultural scale? What if fields were small and local, wild areas took precedence and food growing for humans took place around the edges or in the spaces?



Currently around 90,000 mostly Eastern European low waged seasonal workers are flown in for the British harvest. What if labour became a significant year-round input again, replacing fossil fuel inputs of fuel and fertiliser? What if this human agricultural labour was recognised as vocational, full of dignity and embedded in community?

London currently needs about 125 times its own area, almost the entire arable area of Great Britain, to feed itself. What if cities became giant farms, railways became market gardens, and local urban communities substantially fed themselves?

Currently animal farming takes up 83% of agricultural land for 18% of our calories. What if we switched to a substantially plant-based diet, thereby cutting land use by 76% and greenhouse gases by 50%?

May our Lammas gifts truly reflect the abundance we have so freely received.

“For all things come from you and of your own do we give you.”

Photo: The wheat at St James’s was harvested on St. James’s Day, 26th July 2020 at an open-air Eucharist held in the courtyard. It was threshed, winnowed and later ground and baked into two small loaves which will be consecrated on Lammas Sunday 2nd August.