Crowland Abbey

REVD MARK WILLIAMS
PRIEST IN CHARGE

Autumn is well and truly upon us now. Autumn is possibly my favourite season of the year. After the sweltering heat of summer comes cool and refreshment. Days draw in and nights fall earlier and earlier. We reset timers… hope the boilers fire up again… There is something cosy about turning on radiators, lighting fires, and making mugs of cocoa instead of iced drink.

Am I waxing lyrical… or living in another world?

Autumn is a time of transition. One day we are sitting in shirt sleeves outside, enjoying a good pint. And the next we are shivering, wrapped up in scarves, raincoats and gloves. Americans call this season 'Fall' – for fairly obvious reasons. (Incidentally, in case you are worried that Americanisms are creeping in, 'Fall' was a good old Tudor and Stuart English word that the Pilgrim Fathers carried to America, which stayed there, while it disappeared over here). We see the spectacular colour that leaves become – golds, reds, oranges, yellows, browns... We rejoice in their variety… then curse when we have to sweep them up. But we see a land resplendent as it moves onto the coldness and bleakness, the death that is winter.

Autumn starts with the celebration of Harvest – as we gather in all the good things that God provides. And we recognise that there are many who do not experience this bounty. Hopefully we are inspired to share some of that bounty as a consequence.

All too soon, in this month of November, we are brought to face the starkness of another 'Fall'. We remember those who have suffered and lost their lives in conflicts round the world. And we earnestly desire and try to commit ourselves to actions that will render this a thing of the past, rather than an endlessly-repeated present.

There is a wistfulness about this season – certainly it brings me to a time of reflection, of what has been, that is now passing.

After this, the church year ends with the feast of Christ the King. Whatever is happening in the world around, we know that we have a solid rock in Christ – something… someone we can hold on to, whatever the world throws at us. Then, in Advent, a New Year is born… born in the cold and bitterness of winter. We stop… think… look forward and anticipate.

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