

Haligmonað - to us, September - means Holy Month (you can hear it if you pronounce the word carefully: *haly-monæth*). The Anglo-Saxons (fyi, Angles = Anglians, Saxons = Sassenachs), according to Bede, named this month holy because they gave thanks for the blessings of the land.

The coming together of Angle and Saxon in this land brought much fruit in many ways, as did the greater integration of the whole of our United Kingdom. The Scots this month are to deliberate on whether or not this continues to be, for them, for the greater good. I am hoping they will see in our joint history of the last few hundred years the blessings of being united.

There's something worrying when people cannot rejoice in their distinctiveness without building fences: have they been treated badly or is there a greed in not wanting to share their fruits with neighbours? The thing is, if we can't do this with our long-standing, intermarried and socially integrated partners in the same isles, what practise can we genuinely call upon when we have to deal with peoples whose way of life is significantly different to ours?

September brings to mind several things by which we are blessed: fruit of the trees as well as fruit of the soil - not to mention the ever-present fruit of the seas - and colours as well as tastes intermingling. Grace for all of us, regardless of whether or not we personally produced it; just be mindful to see and know how holy these blessings are.

There is an excitement, too, at this time of year. What comes next, are we ready for it, will it be a deep winter, will we have someone to stand with us in hardships; can we share the things in which we rejoice? Sharing and being alongside one another brings holiness. The greatest blessing was thus: true knowledge of God enabled by God sharing himself with us. (I don't need to be explicit about Jesus again, do I?)

At the very least, think on Hilaire Belloc's verse:

*Lo! a ripe sheaf of many golden days
Gleaned by the year in autumn's harvest ways,
With here and there, blood-tinted as an ember,
Some crimson poppy of a late delight
Atoning in its splendour for the flight
Of summer blooms and joys
This is September.*

If knowing our blessings leads to holiness, then September is indeed Haligmonað.