

Back to School

It has been a long time since I wrote anything! The summer seemed to be a whirl of visiting family and friends and trying to keep on top of a very productive organic allotment - jam, chutney, freezing etc. Since then I have been drowning under a pile of emails and requests to put dates in the diary. My son, Joel has also started high school which has involved lots of journeys to and fro and quite a bit of parental anxiety (Joel has got on just fine). So when Ken Sehested kindly circulated a litany for Labor Day (which is celebrated in the US and Canada) it seemed a good moment to pause and do some thinking, which naturally led to writing, which ended up with this reflection/Eucharist for September and going back to school!

There's a decided nip in the air
As the sun increasingly struggles
to get out of bed as dawn breaks
And the cooler nights begin to draw in

Balmy days of summer give way
To sudden downpours or endless drizzle
And the traffic on the old road
Crawls dejectedly towards its destination

As the rain leaves puddles in the ditch by the kerb
The sun breaks through with sudden brightness
As we ponder whether to take a coat
And umbrella just in case

The mobile phone alarm rings out its annoying tune
and John Humphrys reports yet another disaster
as we drag ourselves, bleary eyed from sleep
and stagger to the kitchen for much needed coffee

**For in the cycle of the seasons
September is here
A time to think about
Work, rest and play.**

Yet this is the time of new starts
And getting back to the familiar routine
The pattern of working 9 – 5 days
or irregular pre-determined shifts

This is the time to learn to tie a school tie
To pull on new, shop-starched uniform
Blow dry freshly showered hair
And search for that illusive PE kit

As we race against the ticking of the clock
We grab a quick bowl of cereal or slice of toast
Stuff books and pencil cases into school bags
And panic over packed lunches still to make

Scrunched up letters to be signed,
Lanyards with photo cards to be topped up,
Work papers to read and pack with lap top
Must remember to charge the mobile phone.

For in the cycle of the seasons

September is here

A time to think about

Work, rest and play.

And yet in the excitement of starting a new school or job
or of meeting old friends and colleagues
back at school or office or construction yard
and sharing stories of summer exploits

Help us to stop in the chaos of the morning rush
And give thanks for the work that gives rhythm to our days
Work and school that give a sense of purpose and meaning
Of achievement and well-being.

Help us to pause in the midst of the excitement and stress
And give thanks for work that sustains our lives and communities
And school that gives us knowledge and skills
And the promise of a career to come.

Help us to rest at the end of each day
To give thanks for tasks completed
the new things we have learned and accomplished
the challenges we have overcome

For in the cycle of the seasons

September is here

A time to think about

Work, rest and play.

And we give you thanks for your work
Of creating our world and the cycle of the seasons
For the abundance of veg on the allotment
And the squirrels hording chestnuts in the park.

And we give you thanks for your work
Of creating humankind and our diverse community
For the people around us in whose faces
We catch a glimpse of your myriad of feelings for us.

And we look around us and realise
that not everyone is rushing to get to school or work
and we remember those who have no work
or nothing to get out of bed for

And we look around us and realise
That others are overworked trying to provide for their family
or struggling with disabilities that make travel difficult

or learning and uphill task

For in the cycle of the seasons

September is here

A time to think about

Work, rest and play.

For we think of the person of Jesus
Who balanced itinerant work and the demands of crowds
With withdrawing to quiet places to rest
And time to enjoy eating and laughing with friends

For we think of the person of Jesus
Who challenges us to think about the work we do
To pay a fair wage and treat colleagues with dignity
To live sustainably on the earth

For we think about Jesus' stories of the righting of injustice
Of the relationship between land owners and labourers
The need for acceptance of tax collectors and prostitutes
And the inequality between rich and poor

And we confess that we are part of a system
That perpetuates injustice and supports the bully
That encourages work at the expense of family life
And prefers burn-out to longevity.

**And so we remember that on the night
before Jesus' work was brought abruptly to an end
he took the bread made by human toil and human hands
gave thanks, broke it and shared it with them**

[break and share bread]

**And so we remember that on the night
Before Jesus' work was brought abruptly to an end
He took the wine of celebration and community
Gave thanks, poured it and shared it with them**

[break and share wine]

And so we commit ourselves
As the new school year of September unfolds
To use our work or rest or play
Labours paid and unpaid

To work for the common good
To ensure that all may find work
That pays a fair wage and brings fulfilment
And enables us to live in harmony with the earth

And so we commit ourselves

As the new school year of September unfolds
To use our work or rest or play
Labours paid and unpaid

To balance our work, school and home life
To enjoy time with families and friends
To take the rest to which your Sabbath calls us
To walk in the rhythm of your Shalom

For in the cycle of the seasons

September is here

A time to think about

Work, rest and play.

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