

HOMILY

FOOD

These last few weeks I have been driving around our beautiful countryside marvelling at the golden crops in the fields, some already baled and rolled ready for taking away to store for future use, and giving thanks for a good summer at last to ripen the grain’.

HOWEVER, I was forced to reconsider these thoughts when I realised that because of the beautiful summer. Yes, the crops have ripened well, but the quality of the grain is very poor with less height to the stalks and less individual grains per stalk. So not such a good harvest for our farmers after all.

It is a powerful reminder of how dependent our farmers and growers are on the extreme changes in the weather. Not just the bad weather but also the good.

It is not only the arable farmers having a hard time but the livestock farmers who are also struggling, having to feed the animals their precious stores of valuable winter fodder to get them through the summer because the grass is so poor.

Over the many years of history the regularity of the grain harvest and a full granary was at the centre of a settled life, even the centre of religion. So running right through the history of

civilization is the issue of having enough grain to avoid being without it.

We only have to remember the riots in the French Revolution and the famine in Ireland to remind us that food and survival are linked in a way in which, thankfully we cannot fully understand.

Grain means bread and bread means life.... The absence of it means famine, starvation and death.

How many of us can resist the smell of newly baked bread? There is an old adage which says 'Bread is the Staff of Life'

My mother instilled in me how wrong it was to throw any bread away because of the connection with the body of Christ. Something I still feel very guilty about when throwing away the last couple of mouldy slices from a bought loaf.

The diocese is urging us at this time as a church to remember our farmers and to listen to them and what they have to say about their struggles. There is a list of farming charities on the Diocese website for information.

It is so easy to take our food for granted.... We can buy varieties of food at any time of year, salad and strawberries at Christmas and root veg in the summer. So as we walk towards our harvest celebrations and services of thanksgiving can we all be just a

little bit more mindful of where our daily food comes from and the struggles of our farmers to provide it for us.

As the Slow Food Movement encourage... Wherever possible try to buy seasonally and locally.