

Rogation days are days of prayer and fasting in Western Christianity.

The so-called major rogation is held on the 6th Sunday of Easter (it was the 7th May this year) but there are three minor rogations on the Monday to Wednesday preceding Ascension Thursday (so that's this week!).

Historically, the Rogation Days were a period of fasting and abstinence, asking for God's blessing on the crops for a bountiful harvest, and giving thanks for the fruits of the earth and the labours of those who produce our food.

Its another example of a Roman or pagan feast being Christianised, but it seemed very popular in Europe and was brought to this country around the 7th century. The earliest liturgy's we have are 1100 - where there was a procession to beat the bounds and pray for the crops. Clearly in those days it was a chance for the whole village to have a day off, and a party, and it became discouraged in the 17th and 18th centuries, except for the "older and more pious men of the congregation"! (*And they wonder why church attendance declined?!*)

But I think that it did happen in Alderholt under Vicar Philip, and it is a great thing to do - for both the social and spiritual reasons. It is good to be reminded of our dependence upon the land and our gratitude to the farmers and those who look after our land, and to remind us of our responsibility for the environment.

This year, more than ever - nature is showing us a fantastic spring, the birds are louder, and we should give thanks and bless it all. But also we have realised our dependence on the food supply chain - those who continue to work the land, those who drive delivery trucks through the night to keep our shelves stocked, those who work in the shops. And there is much to ask for - protection, blessing, hope of a better world by harvest time.

A prayer for Rogationtide:

Remember, Lord, your mercy and loving-kindness towards us.

Bless this good earth, and make it fruitful.

Bless our labour, and give us all things needed for our daily lives.

Bless the homes of our parish and all who live within them.

Bless our common life and our care for our neighbour.

Hear us, good Lord. Amen.