

Free Manure and Offal Jokes

Housewife to son: "Go to the butcher's and get a pig's head. Ask him for one with the eyes still in to see us through the weekend."

Small child to father on returning from shops: "We saw a pig in the butcher's today, Daddy."

Father: "Was it a real one, dear."

Child: "No, Daddy. It was made of meat."

Family Butcher - a double entendre?

These jokes don't really work any more. Butcher's shops are disappearing as fast as country pubs. Children aren't allowed to run errands on their own any more. Even where there are butcher's shops, you seldom see the meat hanging up on display.

On the other hand, in the countryside, you do see signs offering free manure. It seems that horse owners can't give the stuff away. What was once a prized product, recycled grass (long before recycling became fashionable) is no longer wanted. Fewer people have gardens than used to and many of those who do have gardens would rather buy "clean" fertilizer from the garden centre. The days are long gone when, if you heard a horse clip clopping past your house, you went out with a shovel and a bucket. For the same reason, dustbins are full of kitchen and garden waste which ought to be on compost heaps, not tantalising foxes to rip open black sacks on Thursday mornings.

We have lost our connection with where food comes from when we buy everything prepared and pre-packaged from the supermarket. This disconnection obviously has many advantages. Otherwise we would not have allowed it to happen, but it has disadvantages too and, just maybe they outweigh the benefits. Surely, meals prepared at home from fresh ingredients taste better and are more nourishing. Our disconnection from where food comes from may make us unappreciative of farmers and the challenges they face. It may also leave us unsympathetic to the plight of the millions of people in the world today who still depend on subsistence farming or something close to it, who may face ruin when crops fail. Turning agriculture into an industry may have adverse implications for animal welfare and for the environment generally. Life is just so tedious if it amounts to little more than earning money and spending it. There is a great deal of satisfaction to be derived from gardening and the exercise is good for you. If you grow your own food, you also know what pesticides and artificial fertilisers have been used on it, if any. Cooking food is creative too. Preparing and eating a good lunch or dinner might actually be a more fulfilling way to pass the time than warming something up in the microwave and then balancing it on your lap while you watch a TV programme – which these days will most likely be about cooking!

I do have to confess to giving up growing vegetables the year they were all eaten by the slugs, but perhaps I should have persevered. I very much enjoy my home grown fruit – apples, rhubarb and blackberries – which any fool can grow, even me. And, of course, when you are reading this, there will be plenty of wild blackberries and other fruit and nuts which you can pick and eat, so long as you know what you are doing. One of the proudest moments of my life was, when for some reason there were no flowers available for a wedding, I was able to supply enough roses to decorate the church from my own garden. Most of the time, I am too disorganised to bake my own cakes, but when I do the result is far superior to bought cake and brings with it a certain self-satisfaction. And bread is easy with a bread maker.

We have lost our connection with where food comes from. Like all good things, good food comes from God, whether you buy it from the supermarket or the farm gate or whether you grow your own. Thankful people are healthy people. To give thanks is to bless and to be blessed. When we say thank you to God, we bless God. When we say thank you to other people, we bless them. When we bless, we are blessed. *It is better to give than to receive.* When we remember that everything we have is a gift, we remember to share, to give to others as we have received. Our lives are fulfilled in giving and receiving, fellowship and communion. It is a great mistake to become disconnected from the Source of everything that is good.

Our Harvest Festival services will be on 5th October. Holy Communion at 8.00 in the Jubilee Hall, 9.30 at St Michael's Cuxton & 11.00 at St John's Halling. Harvest Evening Prayer will be at 6.30 at St Michael's Cuxton, followed by the Harvest Supper in the church hall. Roger Knight, Rector of Cuxton & Halling,

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