



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Malaysia is truly blessed to have a multicultural population with a whole range of festivals and holidays to mark both cultural and religious celebrations. The Ponggal festival among the people of South India is one such occasion, though not marked by a public holiday, has taken on a solemn celebratory tone not just among farmers but has also become a significant cultural marker for the South Indian communities especially among Tamilians.

Though most non Tamilians are just familiar with the signature dish of rice boiled in sweetened milk, the festival has both religious and cultural roots and has been traditionally celebrated over four days. This resonates with our Judeo Christian experience of extending the celebration of our great feasts over a period of several days to several weeks. It is as if we do not wish to allow the celebrations to cease especially when it is offered as heartfelt thanksgiving to God.

To modern man who sees everything in a utilitarian way and raises the value of work to a level of religiosity, holidays are regarded as a waste of time and are deemed unproductive. But for us Christians, following the tradition of the Jews, holidays and feast days are God's gift to us so that we may rest from our labour, remember the blessings we have received from Him and offer Him the thanksgiving which is His due.

Judaism celebrated not just one but three harvest festivals. We Christians have inherited two of these festivals and we know them as Easter and Pentecost. Although, these festivals are tied to different agricultural crops, which would imply that these festivals had their origin during the time the Israelites had already occupied the land and had begun to cultivate it, they point back to the most significant historical event of the Jews - the Exodus. In this way, these festivals are not just occasions to celebrate the fruitful harvest of the crops and make an offering of the first fruits to God, but they are also occasions to remember and give thanks to God for His wonderful works of saving His people.

Today, as a community of Holy Family, let us join our Tamil community and other South Indian communities of our parish to celebrate this wondrous festival. Eeniya Ponggal vazhthukal.

“Honour the Lord with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce; then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine.” Proverbs 3:9-10

Your Shepherds,

Fr Michael Chua, Fr Philip Chua and Fr Bonaventure Rayappan
Ponggal 2022
Second Sunday in Ordinary Time