

Rooted and fruitful

Jeni Parsons *reflects on* Psalm 1

The double image in this short psalm is meant to grab us. The images of trees firmly rooted and chaff being blown away are powerful – be steadfast not flimsy! Psalms take on this pattern of vivid image in the middle to give substance to the other bits, the beginning and ending. It's like a piece of music with an introduction and conclusion, or a piece of fabric with borders of embroidery.

So the tree is deep-rooted, planted in a place that will keep it alive, however dry the season, fruitful in its proper time. The chaff by contrast is light and flimsy, a breath of wind scatters it and it is gone.

The ones who are like the tree are not just people of faith but their "talk" and their "walk" match, so that their faith makes a difference to their decisions and actions. The water they need for their sturdy deep-rootedness is found in the things of God.

The chaff-like folk are different because that rooting is missing – so much so that, when the temptation comes to go along with the crowd and ridicule goodness, or benefit from the corruption of those in power, they do it without a thought. It's not that they're not "religious", but it hasn't percolated through to their roots and their decision-making is awry. 🍃

Fruits of the Spirit

– a meditation on Galatians 5:22-23

The olive, a symbol of peace

by Caroline Hodgson

The olive branch was God's symbol to Noah that the storms were over. Throughout the Bible and in the sacraments, olive oil is used as a balm to anoint, soothe and heal. The concept of peace can be daunting, as in "world peace". But it doesn't have to be overwhelming. The healing balm of prayer is the best way for the individual soul

to find peace. As the thirteenth-century Dominican writer and preacher William Peraldus wrote: "Prayer is a dove, the bird of the Holy Spirit, which brings the olive branch and wins peace."

Before you pray, try this simple meditation. Close your eyes and breathe naturally. For a few breaths, let your attention settle on the in-breath, and the out-breath. This will clear your mind of the day's clutter, before you turn to God in prayer. 🍃



God, may our deep rooting be in you, so that our lives bear fruit for the sake of others. May what we say with our lips show in our lives, for the sake of Jesus our Lord. Amen.

Food in the Bible

Bread

by Caroline Fletcher

Bread was a staple of the biblical diet. Loaves were often large, round and only a few centimetres thick, so they were broken rather than cut, just as Jesus broke the bread at the Last Supper.

As is the case today, bread was usually made from wheat, although poor people used

barley and this is what the loaves used to feed the five thousand were made from (John 6:9).

Yeast was sourced by saving a small amount of fermented dough from each batch to include in the next. The woman described mixing yeast into flour in one of Jesus' parables would have done just this (Luke 13:21). However, during Passover Jews were forbidden from using yeast at all and were instructed to eat only unleavened flatbread. This type of bread is quicker to make, not needing time to rise, reminding the Israelites how their ancestors had to eat in haste before fleeing Egypt. 🍃

“ I have said this to you, so that in me you may have peace. In the world you face persecution. But take courage; I have conquered the world!”

John 16:33