

## May 21 - Rogation Sunday

Rogation means an asking of God - for blessing on the seed and land for the year ahead. It is appropriate in any emergency, war, plague, drought or foul weather.

The practice began with the Romans, who invoked the help of the gods Terminus and Ambarvalia. In those days a crowd moved in procession around the cornfields, singing and dancing, sacrificing animals, and driving away winter with sticks. The people wanted to rid the cornfields of evil. In about 465 Europe was suffering from earthquake, storm and epidemic. So Mamertius, Bishop of Vienne, aware of the popular pagan custom, ordered that prayers should be said in the ruined or neglected fields on the days leading up to Ascension. With his decision, 'beating the bounds' began to become a Christian ceremonial.

Rogation-tide arrived in England early in the eighth century, and became a fixed and perennial asking for help of the Christian God. On Rogation-tide, a little party would set out to trace the boundaries of the parish. At the head marched the bishop or the priest, with a minor official bearing a Cross, and after them the people of the parish, with schoolboys and their master trailing along. Most of them held slender wands of willow.

At certain points along the route - at well-known landmarks like a bridge or stile or ancient tree, the Cross halted, the party gathered about the priest, and a litany or rogation was said, imploring God to send seasonable wealth, keep the corn and roots and boughs in good health, and bring them to an ample harvest. At one point beer and cheese would be waiting for the walkers.

In the days when maps were neither common nor accurate, there was much to be said for 'beating the bounds' - still very common as late as the reign of Queen Victoria. Certainly parish boundaries rarely came into dispute, for everyone knew them. [1891 Census Parish of Bromley. Ecclesiastical Parish: St. Peter & St. Paul. That part of the Parish taking in Simpsons Road, Westmoreland Road (to the Parish Boundary), Aylesbury Road (right hand side only), Newbury Road, Hawkesworth Road, High Street from corner of Simpsons Road (left side).] Do you know yours today?

## May 25 - Ascension Day Forty Days with the Risen Christ



May continues the season of Eastertide, and 40 days after Easter comes Ascension Day. It may seem crazy to call it Eastertide when Easter is clearly over! - but these are the forty days during which the Risen Christ appeared again and again to his disciples, following his death and resurrection.

The Gospels give us little of Christ's teachings and deeds during those forty days. Jesus was seen by numerous disciples: on the road to Emmaus, by the Sea of Galilee, in houses, etc. He strengthened and encouraged his disciples, and at last opened their eyes to all that the Scriptures had promised about the Messiah. Jesus also told them that as the Father had sent him, he was now going to send them - to all corners of the earth, as his witnesses.