

A day to remember that the harvest exists and that it sustains our lives

By [Steve Thorngate](#)

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Today is Michaelmas, St. Michael the Archangel's feast day that's traditionally associated with the harvest. I like [Travis Norvell's idea](#) to recover the day's observance in a culture that's largely forgotten its relationship with the land:

The ancient Celts baked struan, bread made with harvested grains, for Michaelmas. The day was a locavore feast. The more I researched Michaelmas, the more I realized this largely-forgotten holy day could be the day for urban churches to connect with the land.

What if on the weekend before Michaelmas churches offered locally harvested/sourced meals? What if churches imagined Michaelmas as the day to lift up compassionate and sustainable agriculture practices as part of its mission? What if churches offered Michaelmas as the holy day for urban populations to reconnect with the land and rhythms of life our ancestors intuitively knew? . . . Michaelmas could become the “urbanite-locavore holy day.”

I can't resist nitpicking Norvell's word choices a little. I'm not sure the identity markers of "urbanite-locavore" are helpful; there's a lot of overlap between the goals of local eating and learning to love the land and its goodness, but they're not precisely the same thing. And the problem of a rootless, soil-less life is at this point much more widespread than the solution of local food. As for "urbanite," we city dwellers are far from the only people whose relationship to the land has been diminished, by whatever combination of factors. It's a problem that pervades American culture, and a religious observance that seeks to address it ought to be—as ever—clearly and plainly for everyone.

But like I said, nitpicking. It's a great idea. It's a connection across time and place to Christians with a sense of order and existence that's intimately tied to the seasons and the land. I'm among those who believe that liturgical renewal generally and attention to the church year in particular can (among other things!) do much to

rebuild such an earthier, more agrarian sense of reality. But a specific observance—one that's not some newfangled thing but an old theme of a now-obscure feast day—could do a lot to focus our attention.

I hadn't thought about this before I read Norvell's post, but I imagine others have. Anyone have stories about observing Michaelmas in this way? (Ideally stories about churches and not [Waldorf schools](#)...)