



Loyola College Society, Chennai.

Dear Teaching, Non-Teaching, Technical, Administrative and Supporting Staff Members,

When we look down the corridor of time, we see that human beings were either taking care of cattle or farms. The birth of every great civilization has, at its very foundation, the knowledge of animal rearing or agriculture. And to sustain it water was necessary; and that is why all the civilizations started on riverbanks. Agricultural revolution, being the primary one, prompted people to till the soil and work with domesticated animals; and there rose the celebration of harvest with joy.

In all major cultural histories, harvesting holds a great sense of pride. The Psalmist says: Those who sow with tears will reap with songs of joy (Ps 126:5). Also, it is the tradition to bring 'the best of the first fruits of the soil into the house of the Lord' (Ex 23:19) as the Lord has been toiling with the people all along. The harvest festival, in many of the cultures, is a celebration of singing and thanking God and nature. In our culture we also thank the cattle, which had been considered the source of wealth and help in the agriculture and harvest. We have a special day of Pongal celebration for them as well.

When we celebrate Pongal, we are bound to think of all those who made our food possible. Even a single grain of rice is the result of the hard work of so many people: Let us think of those who brought such a food to our table/plate. It was harvested in a far away place; and it has been the outcome of the toil of so many by sowing/planting, weeding, reaping and storing the paddy. And add the hundreds of people who might have worked to cultivate and season so many variety of spices. And think of so many involved in transporting, storing, selling that one rice to us. Let us think of all these galaxy of people. At the same time let us think of the millions who do not have this luxury of having something to eat on this day. Let us gratefully think of the blessings of God and of our fellow human beings.

Pongal is basically a time of thanksgiving. In Chennai, we have 'Kanum Pongal', which is mainly to visit people to build up or to strengthen our relationships that multiply and enrich our joy and happiness. Let us also thank each other for being there for us. The Jesuit management thanks you for your being with the Jesuits and for sharing their vision and for collaborating in their mission. Wish you all a happy Pongal.

With kind regards,

Francis P Xavier SJ

