

The choice of a dairy Sunday is interesting and nostalgic, since we now no longer have any active dairy farmers in our church and at one time it seemed nearly everyone lived on a dairy farm. In 1935, there were 590,000 dairy cows in Saskatoon and today there are only 31,000 - (nineteen times fewer.)

On our own farm, fluid milk shipping began in 1923 when Johan Driedger milked 6 cows by hand and because they were so close to the train station, could easily take the case or two to be shipped to Saskatoon. The first gas powered milking machine arrived in 1942 or 1943 and made it easier to milk more cows. Amazing technology when you've been milking by hand. I remember as a child seeing the first jet trails in the sky and we surmised that one day technology would allow cows to be milked without human help. And now there are several farms in our area with exactly that technology in the form of robotic milkers.

- Our farm workers – Ipepers. MCC visitor exchange to Osler – visitor kids.

But this dairy Sunday is not only to nostalgiate about dairy farming and to philosophise what spiritual lessons our bovine sisters may have taught us. The Bible itself was written into an agrarian society where likely 90% of the people were subsistence farmers. The Levitical laws were in that context and even Jesus' parables and stories were in that context as well. There were likely not dairy cows, but sheep and goats that may have been milked.

Some of the lessons of dairy farming might have been taught us by urban members who might correctly claim that we "carry airs" with us to church. Sometimes, because we farmers have such similar work, we tend to discuss farming in church, excluding others from conversation.

- Lessons from our Bovines: Some of the lessons – expensive barns, 22 ½% interest rates

There are days when working with and among cows, that I imagined myself to have superior intelligence to these cows, but I wondered what do these animals think about? Do they understand where their feed comes from – are they grateful? And I often think of that analogy on another level; where God must look at humankind and wonder at our gratitude, or the aggressiveness and greed of a big bully cow on a timid good milker. There is enough feed – food for the entire world, so what's with the greed to cause wars and poverty?

Again, when I was a child, the division of animal and what was human was very clearly delineated and when you deal with animals, you question what is the human soul with all the implications we have been taught.

The lessons, as many things in life, raise more questions than answers. Certainly patience and self-control go far further once you deal with animals. I remember one of the first times

observing a total automated robotic milker, when one of the cows became agitated and kicked at the milker. The machine just quietly re-attached the milker without any words, like: 'I really wish you had not kicked the milder into the gutter' I really, really wish.....

We are getting closer to heaven.