**November 11. 2020**

***Remembrance Day Rambling - from Doug Harrison***

*From the Ramblings editorial group (Barbara Downie, Mary Elizabeth Piercy, Beth Theis): Doug’s Remembrance Day piece reflects his own experience of a faith that has sustained him, and we ask that you read it as such. We all have our own personal theologies, and his may well differ from yours. Please accept his offering of his own heartfelt view of what is central to Christianity.*

Remembrance Day is a time that we remember the human sacrifice of our soldiers, sailors, air force members and merchant mariners killed in action in our military conflicts.

It is this willingness to sacrifice one’s life that makes the profession of arms unique from others.

General Sir John Hackett in his book entitled *The Profession of Arms* makes a distinction between the profession of arms and other occupations. He says, “There are occupations in which what is demanded of those who pursue them cannot be entirely regulated by contracts between men. **The essential basis of the military life is the ordered application of force under an unlimited liability**. It is this unlimited liability which sets the man (or woman) who embraces this life somewhat apart. He (she) will always be a citizen. So long as he (she) serves, he (she) will never be a civilian.”

Military service is a risky business with the threat of death or serious injury always near at hand. When an individual joins the military, he or she takes an oath. Explicit in that oath is the understanding that the individual will follow the legal orders given by a superior officer. To not do so is to mutiny. These legal orders usually put the individual in dangerous circumstances where they may die or be seriously injured. The order is not debatable at the time given and must be obeyed. The individual must therefore always be prepared to sacrifice their life. This is the unlimited liability the military person must always bear while serving. The courage and willingness to do so is rare in individuals and, when death or serious injury occurs as a result, such sacrifice must be deeply honoured.

The military has many colourful ceremonial traditions which are observed from time to time. Many people contend that these ceremonies and parades are the glorification of war! No soldier who is truly a soldier ever glorifies war. It is a dastardly business. Rather, these events usually are meant to glorify sacrifice.

Sacrifice is central to our Christian faith. And, sacrifice, life, death and love are mystically intertwined. John said that “greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John 15: 13). Solomon said that “love is as strong as death” (Song of Solomon 8:6).

Our Lord sacrificed His life on Calvary. And a loving Father raised Him from the dead three days later demonstrating His power over death and giving us the gift of eternal life. All we have to do is believe. What a sacrifice for our Lord. What a demonstration of love from our God.

Paul exhorts us in return to “present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service” (Romans 12:01). Also, read Ephesians 6:10-18. Verse 12 seems particularly appropriate for these times.

On Remembrance Day, I remember those soldiers that I have served with and who have died in the service of our country or the United Nations. One most poignant to me is the death of Trooper Bons in Egypt in 1964. Eighteen years old and the son of Dutch immigrants to Canada, Bons lost his life when his patrol vehicle accidentally hit a double anti-tank mine on the edge of a minefield laid by the Egyptians along the International Frontier in the Sinai desert. My unit had just received his Certificate of Canadian Citizenship and it would have been presented to him in a couple of days. He wasn’t yet even a Canadian citizen when he chose to serve his adopted country. His crew commander was also killed along with an Egyptian Frontier Police officer who had just been apprehended. What a sacrifice! I always reflect whether or not his (Bons) and their service was in vain. Somehow, I know it wasn’t.

On Remembrance Day, I also reflect on the fact that Jesus understood completely the soldier’s unlimited liability. The usually unstated contract I had while serving. And the contract every military member has today. I feel a personal kinship with Him on this matter. I know that He walked with me and gave me courage in those dangerous circumstances and times as a soldier when I was afraid (for my life), lonely and perhaps uncertain. He gave me strength and courage. And He guided my personal and command decisions in those situations. And, not only did He understand the soldier’s liability but He himself actually faced an outrageous death sentence and, although tempted, courageously and willingly succumbed to it.

Today let us remember and be thankful for the human sacrifices our military brothers and sisters made in war. And, also let us reflect on the sacrifice of Jesus Christ our Lord and the resurrection gift of eternal life given to us by God. And, let us also remember that He is still walking with us through the difficult times we are currently facing.