

Today is Remembrance Day—a day in which we gather to remember all those who served this nation and gave their lives during times of war.

We remember because we must. We are all products of our pasts. We have all inherited ideas, attitudes and values from those who have gone before. We are not atomistic and autonomous beings who can simply divorce ourselves from the past. We remember the past and those who have gone before us, because it is part of who and what we are as Christians. Those who have preceded us have in a very real way helped to shape who we are, how we live out our faith and our lives and how we organize our society and churches. To understand ourselves we must have some understanding of our predecessors. It is only through knowledge of where we come from that we can hope to know who we are today and who it is that God calls us to be in the future. In his book, *The Communion of Saints*, James Carroll suggests that knowing and telling the stories of our lives and our communities are sacred activities. Carroll writes:

The very act of story-telling, or arranging memory...is by definition holy. We tell stories because we can't help it. We tell stories because we love to entertain and we hope to edify. We tell stories because they fill the silence death imposes. We tell stories because they save us.

In recalling the events of our past, we are reminded of the parallels between our own individual stories and the larger story of God's people. We begin to discover the links between our present experience and that of those who went before us. We become part of a living tradition. I

In remembering all those who gave their lives during times of war, we honour their courage, their sacrifice and their service. But we do not gather to celebrate war—war may be necessary at times but it is always a product of human failure; of our failure to live in fellowship and communion with one another; our failure to live in peace and compassion as God has commanded us. We remember war not to celebrate—but to remember its tremendous cost, its ultimate tragedy—so that we might choose to live in the love and peace and understanding that God wishes for us.

In remembering all those who have died in war, we also remember the fundamental tenet of the Christian faith—the belief that death is not an end but a beginning. In our first reading, from the book of Wisdom, we heard that “the souls of the righteous are in the hands of God, and no torment will ever touch them.” We believe that those who suffered the torments of war, are even now at rest in the hands of God. In our reading from first letter of Peter, we are assured that those who have suffered through the various trials of life and have been tested by fire are even now experiencing indescribable and glorious joy. And in our Gospel, Jesus reminds us that the will of God the Father is that “all who see the Son and believe in him have eternal life; and I will raise them up on the last day.”

And so today we gather to remember, to remember all those who have died in the service of their country. But we gather as well confident in the promise of the resurrection to all those who have faith. In John's Gospel, Jesus proclaims: "he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me, shall never die." John's words remind us that we come from God and we return to God and that God is present with us—even in times of loss and sorrow, even in the horror that is war. But to believe in Christ is also to believe in love—the love that seeks peace among nations, the love that seeks reconciliation among peoples, the love that shows compassion and mercy to all.

As we prepare to receive the Eucharist, let us remember all of the souls of this parish and community that gave their lives in times of war and who found Jesus here, in this place, at the foot of this altar. And let us remember how each one of them was a unique witness for Christ, calling us to make our witness to God's peace and love in the world, as we come to this table to receive the bread of life and the cup of salvation.

God of love, may the death and resurrection of Christ our Lord, bring us, with all the faithful departed, into the peace of your eternal home. We ask this in the name of Jesus, our hope and our salvation. Amen.