

‘At the going down of the sun, and in the morning, we will remember them.’

Some of the most beautiful and poignant words that have ever been written.

A quiet demand that the world never forgets the sacrifice of the few who died for the many.

And yet in spite of the 11th of the 11th being commemorated each year, how easy it is that humanity forgets.

All too quickly does the world seem to move on, so that the devastation brought by war is consigned to history,

Passed on to the next generation via the medium of Hollywood or the apparent fun actions of games consoles.

It is right then that, if only for one day, the world remembers the cost,

The cost of those men, women children and animals whose lives, health and safety has been wrenched apart and are being wrenched apart by war.

And it is especially right that this act of remembrance

should happen in the context of the Church's supreme act of remembrance.

Here, around this altar of remembrance, the church remembers both those who gave their lives, and He who gave His life for them.

But: as the world has forgotten the victims of war, all too quickly as well so too has it forgotten the one who was caught up in the cosmic conflict,

Who gave up His life for the world.

The poet, Lucy Whitmell, discusses this in her poem 'Christ in Flanders.'

In it she writes of the natural human propensity to forget God, to only call upon him when things get tough.

The first verse of the poem is this:

We had forgotten You, or very nearly —

You did not seem to touch us very nearly —

Of course we thought about You now and then;

Especially in any time of trouble —

We knew that You were good in time of trouble —

But we are very ordinary me.

Like the horrors of war, so too has the world forgotten
the name of Jesus,

Another story in a multitude of stories,

A truth in many possible truths.

Or, worse, a name that too many have simply never
heard.

And yet each week, in this supreme act of
Remembrance, His life, ministry, death and
Resurrection are remembered.

In the outpouring of wine and the sharing of bread, the
Church gives thanks for his actions so long ago.

But of course, the Eucharist isn't just something that
happened once for all long ago,

This Mass, this Eucharist is far more than just a
memorial meal.

It is a re-enactment,

Where the once and for all earth shattering events of
2000 years ago are made utterly real in the present,

In the act of remembering and by the power of God's
grace, Christ meets the Church in the here and now

and transforms it so in power of His Spirit, it may be strengthened to transform the world.

This is why the Eucharist is not simply a memorial meal: it is remembrance that leads to transformation.

And likewise, Remembrance Sunday is not just about remembering passively,

It is about remembering actively.

The Spanish philosopher George Santanya, in a variation of a quote by Edmund Burke, famously wrote: “those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.”

A true remembrance of the past must needs bring a look to the present,

Remembering the past must bring a change for the future.

‘At the going down of the sun, we will remember them.’

We might want to add ‘ands we will do so by seeing that their cost was nit in vain.’

As we remember in our silence the brutality of war,

How are we to use the time given to us?

Are we going to be like the foolish bridesmaids in the Gospel reading?

Not making the use of the time?

Continuing to descend into hatred and war?

Or will the world be like those wise bridesmaids,

The pursuance of justice

The quest for peace

And the building up of love.s

Because that is what this Act of Remembrance today is all about:

The certainty that love has the final word,

That the horrors humankind has inflicted and continues to inflict upon itself is quenched and finally extinguished by the sheer, unending, universe shaking power of the one who cries out in love 'it is finished.'

In that moment, Jesus declares an end to evil,

In that moment, Jesus shows the power of love.

On Friday there, the BBC had an interview with Harry Billingham, one of the last surviving veterans of D-Day and at the end of what was an incredible interview he finished by saying 'love is the strongest power on earth. Love is stronger than death: and He's coming back.'

In this act of remembrance, the past not only breaks into the present, but time bends and the church is given also a glimpse ahead into that final banquet, into eternity, when Christ shall finally be all in all.

The Church is called to live in the sure and certain promise of love incarnate's return,

And as it does so, this act of word and sacrament speaks the truth that there is nowhere where the love of Christ is not.

'We will remember him.'

Lucy Whitmell beautifully illustrates this:

*Now we remember; over here in Flanders —
(It isn't strange to think of You in Flanders) —
This hideous warfare seems to make things clear.
We never thought about You much in England —
But now that we are far away from England,
We have no doubts, we know that You are here.*

Christ is even in the darkness.

He was there in the trenches of the Somme as the
soldiers shared mass before ploughing into No Man's
Land,

He was there on the battlefields of Normandy as those
cut down by gunfire cried out,

He was there amidst the armies of those we once called
enemy,

And He is there in the bombed out houses of Syria,.

And the war torn fields of Afghanistan.

Even as the world remembers today, we know that in
this fallen world, sometimes conflict may become
inevitable, or unavoidable.

And that in the world's failure to achieve peace, it may
seem as if the world has forgotten Christ,

But Christ has not forgotten the world.

Though we forgot You — You will not forget us —
We feel so sure that You will not forget us —
But stay with us until this dream is past.
And so we ask for courage, strength, and pardon —

Especially, I think, we ask for pardon —
And that You'll stand beside us to the last.

At the going down of the sun, and in the morning, we
will remember them.