

Remembrance 2020

Today we come together to remember in a poignant year for so many reasons – not only our annual Commemoration but also the 75th year of VE and VJ Day.

we come together to remember those who fought – those who returned, and those who sacrificed their tomorrows for our todays – those who watched and waited at home – those who rallied together to keep the home fires burning – during the times we are remembering, not one person was left unaffected, called to play a part in one way or another.

But as we reflect back, we also want to look forward in hope – and for Christians, that hope springs from the belief in the resurrection of Jesus Christ and its trust and promise of new life and that through that all things are possible as the Holy Spirit fills our hearts and mobilises a longing for peace that can play out in our lives and in our communities and throughout the world.

I wonder if you can sense signs of the promise of peace and calm settling onto the world where you are – and onto the world where we all are...

But today – lest we forget – we remember them...

We acknowledge again the failures that led to that war, and the failures that followed it. We acknowledge the flaws in the human heart that have led us too often to choose the path of violence instead of the way of peace. We grieve for the millions of lives lost or ruined.

But the words of hope that we read today encourages us to remember that deep down there is a spirit of hope and healing waiting to mobilise a new tomorrow of peace – and I believe it has begun, albeit still a long way to go. We have to re-member – putting together that which is broken so that our memories of pain can be the cornerstone of peace – no more, we say – no more....

Let us remind ourselves of the words of Major John Macrae who pleads on behalf of those who fought that they be remembered:

In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.
We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.

These poignant words speak true metaphorically for so many aspects of conflicts, warfare and worldly 'foes' – conflicts and warfare and foes that do not need us to be armed with guns for defence but rather the light of the world to dazzle us with spiritual courage, faith and hope that can enthuse hearts and minds to strive for acts of peace and goodwill towards each other and the planet.

Poppy Lady Moina Michael - who instituted the idea of using poppies for remembrance responded to the poem in these moving words - offering assurance that 'we will remember them'

We Shall Keep the Faith – written in 1918

Oh! you who sleep in Flanders Fields,
Sleep sweet - to rise anew!
We caught the torch you threw
And holding high, we keep the Faith
With All who died.

We cherish, too, the poppy red
That grows on fields where valour led;
It seems to signal to the skies
That blood of heroes never dies,
But lends a lustre to the red
Of the flower that blooms above the dead
In Flanders Fields.

And now the Torch and Poppy Red
We wear in honour of our dead.
Fear not that ye have died for naught;
We'll teach the lesson that ye wrought
In Flanders Fields

Returning to the reading, John reminds us as he proclaims that God is light and in him there is no darkness at all and it is in the words of Jesus himself that God brings down to where we walk and have our being that heavenly hope-light of peace and comfort to shine into and dispel the darkness and distress of these times.

So on this Remembrance Day 2020 – that will be remembered for its name sake and so much more in these conflicting times of pandemic fear, uncertainty and suffering, let's allow ourselves to be nourished as we breathe in hope and promise and to breathe out the darkness and despair – of conflict and pain and all that keeps us from striving for and experiencing the peace that truly can and will pass understanding

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives.

Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid. *John 14.27*