

## REMEMBRANCE DAY ADDRESS

13<sup>th</sup> November 2016

St Wilfrid's Church, Bognor

Across the cities, towns, and villages of this land there are stone memorials with names engraved upon them, millions of names of men and women who died during the two World Wars and the subsequent smaller wars in Korea, Malaya, Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and elsewhere.

### **Today we remember them.**

In our gospel reading today, Jesus predicts the falling of the Temple; that what was the basis of the whole way of Jewish life '*will be thrown down*' by war. He then goes on to make crystal clear that war will be endemic, that '*nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom*' for the foreseeable future. He does not promise the end of war until the end times. So on this day of Remembrance, it is appropriate that we should consider war and its impact.

I am going to do this by giving you a personal insight into the cost paid when New Zealand stood beside Britain in two world wars and a rash of colonial brush fires and also alongside the United States regarding Vietnam. New Zealand lost over 30,000 of its men and women in just the two World Wars or one and half percent of its then population. This cost was also paid here in Britain and what I share now is echoed by every family in this church today.

I remember an elderly relative coughing his life away because of the mustard gas at Ypres.

I remember another cousin who did the most wonderful tapestry as a way of overcoming the memories of the second world war - his life was destroyed except for that tapestry work.

I remember a third cousin serving in the north African desert and then at Monte Cassino, the Benedictine Monastery of peace taken over by evil, building and re-building the bailey bridge across the river.

I remember an uncle who would not talk about what he did in Crete and Greece and would not talk about his time in a POW camp - he talked to the sheep instead. I remember how to this day, the way the Greeks hold the Kiwi's in such high esteem because they came to their aid in WW2.

I remember my aunt who was a nursing sister on a hospital ship in Alexandria and then in the Solomon Islands in the Pacific theatre dealing with bits of shattered bodies and the way she spoke about the smell of the gangrene in the beauty of the Pacific Islands.

I remember my mother telling of nursing the mind shattered G I American lads in Auckland, and the stories from the 'boys who fought the Japs' in Guadalcanal.

I remember as a lad in the early 1950's seeing all the men marching down Queen Street in Auckland to board the troop ships going to Korea and sensing that many would not (and did not) come back.

I remember wanting to sign up for the Vietnam conflict in the early 1970's.

I remember meeting holocaust victims in a Jewish residential rest home in south London.

I remember walking through the holocaust memorial in Jerusalem.

I remember interceding on the top of a mountain in Spain in a Bay of Biscay snow storm for the children in Kosovo and the old Yugoslavia.

I remember the roll of photographs that I compiled a few years ago showing each one of the UK troops who had lost their lives in Afghanistan.

I remember attending the 'Dawn Parade' once a year with my family in Auckland and hearing the sound of the marching feet and clink of the medals as the ex-servicemen and women marched to the Cenotaph in front of the Museum overlooking the naval base at Devonport in Auckland.

I remember Michael Tice, a yeoman of England, a member of this parish, and all those like him, who did their duty and did not speak about the consequences of so doing.

**War destroys;**

**War corrupts;**

**War tests and brings forth great bravery;**

**War tests and brings forth great savagery;**

War leads to great advances in science and technology, in medicine and in the awareness of the mind. War energises. War creates fortunes. War creates refugees. War disrupts.

The effects of war continue for generations, **let no-one glamourise war.**

**But.....**

Great evil **must always** be repulsed and thrown back if civilisation is to thrive and prosper. This is reflected in the Old Testament time and time again with respect to the Canaanites and their various allies.

On occasions, an old and ancient evil rears up and stalks the world and, eventually, it is recognised for what it is. And there arise then, those who have the task to repulse it, and to overcome it, and to ensure that it is put down. And this is costly, sacrificial, often ugly, work, **and we remember them today.**

**But the evil must be put down and put down in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, Saviour.**

War is terrible and the consequences of war flow on for generations. But Evil, and please hear me, EVIL is far worse and, as of old, must always be vigorously repulsed.

Today that ancient and old evil is afoot once again. But today, we have a marked reluctance to recognising the face of the beast once again, and an even more marked reluctance to be prepared to repulse it, and to overcome it. This the complacency of our secular age and it is a fatal complacency that threatens us and our children and grandchildren yet again. **This complacency dishonours those we remember today.**

As we spend time today, remembering, and giving honour to those who gave their lives for us and for our children and grandchildren, let us remember the values that our Lord Jesus Christ brought for us,

*the knowledge of the love of God for us;*

*God who had Jesus die in our place so that the evil in our hearts might be transformed;*

*the knowledge that each one of us is created by God, loved by God and valued by God;*

*the knowledge that we are to love God*

*and to love one another as He loves us.*

As Christians, we are to hold fast to these values.

As Christians, **we must be prepared to defend these values** in the name of Jesus from whom they come.

*'This will give you an opportunity to testify... for I will give you words and a wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to understand or contradict...and they will put some of you to death. You will be hated by all because of my name....[but] By your endurance you will gain your souls.'*

**And in holding fast to these values, and in defending them, even unto death,  
the deaths of those we remember today will be properly honoured.**