

TALK 11th November 2018 Remembrance Day (Centenary)

John Matthews - Puy de Serre

John 14:23-29

1 Timothy 2:1-6

Isaiah 57: 15-19

'Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you...Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.'

Today we mark the Centenary of the time the guns fell silent and the First World War came to an end. Millions dead and wounded on both sides and entire nations traumatised. The war to end all wars had ended, and the peacemaking began.

Once again, today, bugles have sounded The Last Post, and silence will have fallen . Two minutes to remember millions, then the bugle to break the silence, and the Reveille brings the world back into action.

Veterans, with heads high and medals proudly on display, have marched past cenotaphs; poppies have been worn, rightly remembering the sacrifices made by so many individuals. However, for those who had been to war but came home badly wounded , there was a life of pain, enduring grief, and haunting memories. The battlefields may have become tranquil again, but the memories and pain lingered on.

My father, born in 1899, anxious to do his duty, like so many others, signed up at the first opportunity for the First World War, lying about his age, served in France and received a head wound. But he would never give us any details of his wartime experience. He simply wanted to put the past behind him.

My only personal recollections now of the Second World War, and the post-war years, are of time spent in air raid shelters, and of playing on the sites of bombed-out houses, .Ration books, little food in the shops, having to learn to darn socks and to sew patches on worn shorts, before the throw-away society dawned.

Being at that time in Primary school, it was only later I began to realise why, in the households of many of our neighbours, relationships were strained, as couples learned to live together again. Though I'd often wondered why, in so many of the families we knew, husbands and wives could be calm one minute, then, the next, argue violently with each other, yet continue to live together.

‘I have said these things to you, while I am still with you. The Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. **Peace** I leave with you. **My** peace I give to you. I do not give as the **world** gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid’.

So what **is** peace? The dictionary talks of ‘**quiet, tranquility, mental calm, and serenity**’, or ‘**freedom from war**’. Most of us, as a result of the sacrifices of all who fought in the Great Wars, have lived **our** lives in peace, comparative freedom and prosperity. Of course, this would not have been the case if the line had not been held by those who were prepared to respond to the call to do their duty and to defend their country, because they felt they could make a difference.

Once there, they wanted to get the job over, return to their families and enjoy the peace for which they had given so much. But many never got the opportunity to enjoy that peace, and we have since seen many more conflicts and overseas wars in which so many have suffered or been killed. So we know how difficult it is to keep the peace. But, as the dictionary tells us, peace is not just the absence of war?

Television and modern technology, with their war games and virtual reality, have trivialised war. Those of us who have not witnessed first-hand the reality of hand to hand combat or the mass killing of machines of war, can so easily take peace for granted, not realising the horror of war and its effects on individuals and families.

The media remind us every day of on-going wars in so many parts of God’s world; of vast numbers of people being starved of food and shelter. Even in wealthy Western democracies, distribution of that wealth leaves vast numbers living in poverty or dependent on state subsidies to feed their families. Throughout Europe, nations are becoming more nationalistic and less interested in the international networks established to increase co-operation and lessen the prospect of conflict. So how can we, seemingly insignificant individuals, make a difference?

In our Gospel reading, Jesus promised us his peace, **eternally**. What he wants from us is our trust, our love, and our obedience. Jesus tells us that the peace **he** is offering transcends our understanding, and keeps us unafraid and untroubled, whatever happens in the world. But he is not going to compel us to accept all this. We are free to walk away ! The fact that we’re meeting here today, is proof that the earliest disciples believed Jesus and were able to make a difference to those around them and, in the longer term, to the world.

We owe our deepest thanks and respect to the men and women who fought for our peace - along with the assurance that we will continue to defend freedom- and to make the best use of the peace they won for us. Jesus has promised that when we do respond to his offer of his peace, the Holy Spirit begins the process of sanctification as he transforms us -reminding us of the teaching we should obey, filling us with his peace, and empowering us to make a difference.

Today we remember the past, but Jesus asks us to **learn** from the past and offers us **hope** for the future. So, as we remember those who gave their lives for our peace, let's renew our commitment to the Saviour who offers us **bright hope** for tomorrow, and his **eternal** peace.