

Thirty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Dear Parishioners and friends who visit our parish website,

This Sunday we remember the dead of the two World Wars of the 20th century and we offer Mass for the repose not only of their souls but of all those who lost their lives as combatants or civilians in the many other conflicts which cast their long shadow on the history of the last hundred and twenty years. Recent highly-praised films, made by the BBC and other broadcasters, have focused on those who died during the *Troubles*, not least the many children who were killed on both sides by stray bullets or explosions. There were soldiers who died in Afghanistan and on other missions in the Middle East, there were those who fought and died in the south Atlantic and, lest it be forgotten, those young Argentinians who met early deaths in the sinking of the *Belgrano*. The 17th century poet James Shirley reminded those of his own day and posterity – his poem is frequently read at funeral services – that death is a leveller, everyone is equal in death, *death lays his icy hands on Kings, sceptre and crown come tumbling down*, and that death strikes us all with equal force.

But there is a positive side to this equality: we are all equal in the sight of God who loves each one of us infinitely, we are all destined for eternal life in a heaven where hierarchies and rank are a thing of the past. On Friday evening we, as a parish community, remembered in a particular way all those who were buried or carried to their place of rest from Our Lady & St. Anne in the past twelve months. Many of the close relatives of the recently deceased were present at the commemorative Mass and we carried their grief with us particularly. On Sunday however we join with the nation in mourning those who died for Queen/King and Country, those who gave their lives in the fight for freedom or those who, in the military combat or civil conflict which have been such a feature of the 20th century (and have not disappeared in the first two decades of the 21st either), died before their time. Just as on Friday evening the bereaved from our parish gave thanks for the lives of their deceased relatives, so too on Remembrance Sunday a country – led by the Queen at the Cenotaph – honour and give thanks for the lives shortened, often very prematurely, by military or civil conflict.

Despite opinion polls and surveys among the general population which would suggest otherwise, the Remembrance Day ceremonial, no more than the November Masses and services we hold in our churches, all suggest a belief in eternal life and a faith in the reality, inaugurated by Jesus on the first Easter Sunday, of resurrection and the birth of a new, transformed reality. It is important that our liturgies and ceremonies of remembrance combine sorrow and a sense of loss with gratitude and a sense of resurrection faith. And the conviction that *every life* matters.

Father Patrick