

Sunday 11 NOV 18 – Remembrance Day – Centenary of Armistice WW1

SALE CATHEDRAL

8am/10am

I wonder what sort of memory you've got? ... I mean, how well do you remember things? What's your memory like? ...Perhaps yours is like mine: patchy, unreliable, impossible (it would seem) to improve... and possibly getting worse...!!?? I seem to have a selective capacity to remember things as well: e.g. I have almost no capacity to remember names... (a really handy thing in my occupation!) ...I'm great with faces, it's just the names I have trouble with... Mathematical formulas is another thing I have trouble with – always did! – at school especially, and even when I worked in a bank!!

No doubt we all wish we had better memories: to be able to remember anything from anywhere, anytime... to be like some sort of super-computer, that never forgets, and can always recall the right piece of information every time, on time... Of course, we aren't anything like a super-computer at all are we? Sure, some of us can remember things: times, places, people, etc a lot better than others, but on the whole we have poor memories... so much of our past is lost in that murky fog of forgetfulness... doomed to be un-remembered (perhaps) for ever...

That is, of course, one of the most compelling reasons for having a day like today – Remembrance Day ...which this year has fallen on a Sunday, and so today also becomes Defence Sunday – and for days like ANZAC Day... special days that enable us, as individuals and as a community, to “jog” our personal and collective memories, and so remind ourselves of events that are far too important to forget ...to remember the lives of those who gave their lives for the *way of life* we enjoy today – and, dare I say – take so much for granted... These special days that challenge us to remember those who – even as I speak – put their lives on the line (or, “in harm's way”) in order to protect & preserve our way of life... a *way of life* marked by “freedom”, “tolerance”, “justice”, “peace” and a “fair go” for all, regardless of colour, creed or nationality... (pause) I suspect that we need “days” like this one – Remembrance Day ...and Defence Sunday and ANZAC Day – so that we *make* ourselves remember just what has been purchased at such terrible cost – not just in WW1 & WW2, but in every conflict where the sons and daughters of our “wide, brown land” have served – fighting, dying, for people like you and me... How could we ever forget that? (pause) ... And how many will forget to stop today, to pause, to remember... and to give thanks...??? Too many perhaps... But nevertheless we are here: joined in our spirits and in our hearts with countless thousands – yes, millions – all over the world who have not forgotten about this day, this time, this precious moment... (pause)

Forgetting & remembering... easy for some, hard for others... especially the forgetting... (pause) Maybe you've heard of (or read) the book – *Exit Wounds*. It's Major General John Cantwell's personal account of his struggle with PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) – how he became deeply affected by what he experienced in both Gulf wars and in Afghanistan. It's a brutally honest soldier's reflection – a tale of war and woe... For in war, the flesh is so easily wounded, but we now know one's soul – the mind, the spirit – can be wounded so deeply and traumatically that all kinds of various mental health issues ensue – including depression, abusive behaviours, suicidal tendencies, irrational anxieties and fears, and so on... Although he is not a religious man Cantwell recognises that the trauma of war can cause “emotional and spiritual wounds” [his own words] – as sure and certain as a bullet that rips through the flesh, so the mind, heart and soul of a person can be torn apart. And by his own admission, Cantwell is convinced that healing is facilitated by two of life's most precious gifts: *love and forgiveness*... Sounds familiar, doesn't it? (pause) ...Let me encourage us all to sensitively support the efforts of military & community medical/welfare resources as they struggle to come to grips with this phenomenon known as PTSD, and to pray for those who suffer from the debilitating symptoms... (pause)

Forgetting & remembering... May we always remember that there is One who never forgets... our gracious, loving & forgiving God, who holds all our memories – all our past – in gentle hands of grace and peace... There is comfort in knowing that God has not forgotten the fallen: those who have made the ultimate sacrifice, for God knows exactly what that kind of sacrifice is like... for such is the measure and purpose of the life, death & resurrection of Jesus Christ... and that is the great redemptive story of God's Love we remember every time we worship – every time we share the Eucharist together...

(pause)

In conclusion, let me say that as an Anglican Defence Chaplain, I value your understanding and appreciation – and, of course, your prayers – for a ministry that ticks most, if not all, of the “mission boxes”... [ad lib]

- outreach to (mainly) young Australians, struggling with life, work & relational issues
- proclaiming the gospel to those who have never heard the “good news” before
- modelling Christian values & virtues
- an ecumenical ministry that embodies Christ's call to unity
- a truly national Anglican ministry
- a prophetic voice for peace, love and service of others in the face of conflict, fear and violence

Let me close with a beautiful poem... written 100yrs ago by Moina Michael, a devoted woman who – inspired by the (perhaps) more famous poem “In Flanders Fields” – vowed to “keep the faith” ...to never forget... to always remember the sacrifice of those who died in “the great war”... and to wear a red poppy as a sign of remembrance...

[[read Moina's poem](#) – *We Shall Keep the Faith*]

The Lord be with you...