

## Remembrance Sunday (12<sup>th</sup> November)

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen.

The nation mourns: On this second Sunday in the month of November the King leads the nation again in remembering those who have sacrificed their lives for their country on the battlefields of two world wars and other conflicts. As the bells of Big Ben rang eleven, two minutes of complete silence were held in remembrance of all lost in war. His Majesty and other state and military representatives laid wreaths of poppies at the foot of the Cenotaph in the country's capital.

Poppies are *the* symbol of remembrance. After the artillery canons, tanks and countless battalions of infantry had left the battlefields, red poppies grew everywhere. Industrialized warfare of years of artillery pounding especially in the Flemish region, had created the perfect environment for poppies: The pulverization of the brickwork of the centuries old architecture had raised the lime content in the topsoil which served as special fertilizer of millions of red poppies growing particularly well on the battlefields.

**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.**

The Canadian Lieutenant-Colonel John McCrae who died of pneumonia before the war ended in 1918 was also a poet, author and artist, a physician before the war and working as a surgeon during the war. His poem *In Flanders Fields* is written from the point of view of the dead and tries to express the terror of war:

**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.**

A nation, a family or anyone without memory of its past and remembrance of those who came before, is poor. It belongs to our humanity to remember loved ones, parents, grandparents, children, benefactors and all those we are connected to us not only by blood but also in spirit. However, merely cultural customs of remembrance by themselves don't reach into eternity and they do not give us the certainty that those who fought for us in the past are safe in the present. *This* certainty gives us only Our Lord Jesus Christ:

*Hæc est autem voluntas Patris mei, qui misit me: ut omnis qui videt Filium et credit in eum, habeat vitam æternam, et ego resuscitabo eum in novissimo die. For this is the will of My Father Who sent Me, that whoever beholds the Son, and believes in Him, shall have everlasting life, and I will raise him up on the last day.*

Our Lord speaks of the Will of His Father, that will which Our Lord came to do perfectly, because He is the Son of the true God.

*Now this is the will of Him Who sent Me, the Father, that I should lose nothing of what He has given Me, but that I should raise it up on the last day.*

Already the OT spoke of the dead rising from their graves and from sin which delays this resurrection:

*It is therefore a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from sins.* (2 Mach 12:46)

For this purpose, to lose the bondages of sin, Our Lord came from heaven. The text of the Tract of this Requiem Mass celebrated for the fallen of wars says it again:

*O Lord, absolve the souls of all the faithful departed from every bond of sin. And by the help of Your grace may they be worthy to escape the sentence of vengeance. And to enjoy all the beatitude of the light eternal.*

This work of redemption is the exclusive work of Our dear Lord, because only an infinitely precious victim offered on the altar of the Cross by an infinitely worthy priest was able to loosen the bonds of sin.

*At that time, Jesus said to the multitude of the Jews, All that the Father gives to Me shall come to Me, and him who comes to Me I will not cast out.*

Again and again Our Lord confirms what the Church always taught, and, we can say, what the Church was founded for and what she is based on: the hypostatic union, the fact that Jesus is the true Messiah, that He is not only a man, but man and God, the true and only Son of God.

And the Church, knowing Whom she represents, has also the means to continue the work of salvation among mankind. Immediately after his ordination the priest hears the words of admonishment from the mouth of the bishop to pray for living and the dead and to celebrate three Masses, one of them being a requiem mass. Praying for the dead is one of the seven works of mercy the Church has listed as essential in the work of the Church Militant. However, those prayers of the Church are only so effective and fruitful because they are performed in union with Christ, the High Priest. Without our union with Christ, without praying - *Per Dóminum nostrum Iesum Christum Fílium tuum, qui tecum vivit et regnat in unitáte Spíritus Sancti, Deus, per ómnia sǎcula sǎculórum* - *Through our Lord, Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever* - our prayers would be ineffective, because Jesus Christ is the universal savior. On the Cross when Jesus suffered and died as man He had in His divine knowledge all sufferings and pains, all sorrow and wretchedness as also all loneliness and desolation mankind has ever suffered and will ever suffer - so to say - before His eyes as God. And He suffered all these things with us and for us when He spoke His last words: *Consummatum est - It is consummated.*

Because this one Sacrifice on the Cross is now perpetuated on our altars, it is the one gift the Church has received as the Crown Jewel of God's kingly household, the treasure and source of sanctification. And this source is opened again today for the countless known and unknown souls who died in wars.

And this is then how the Church understands the poppies God allowed to grow on the fields of death and destruction: the red poppies draw us to a deeper understanding of the Church's intercession in prayer and the celebrating this and many other requiem masses. The poppies remind us of the new life that was offered to all those who shed their blood for their country in union with Jesus Christ who shed His blood for the salvation of mankind and Who wants to unite all men to Himself in this same Sacrifice of the Mass. Amen.

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen.