

Fr Michael Homily Remembrance Sunday 32 (B) 11 November 2018

I had a rather unexpected email the other day from the Anglican Bishop of Coventry. He had just been to see a performance of a play called *The Window*. The window in question is our very own stained-glass window, the one of the Crucifixion halfway down the aisle, which was given in memory of a young man of Chapelfields who lost his life in the First World War.

Today is the centenary of the Armistice in 1918, and this, our church of the Precious Blood and All Souls was specifically built to commemorate all those who died in that conflict.

I've always had something of a love hate relationship with Remembrance Day. I always find it deeply moving. But there is, I believe, a dark side to Remembrance Day as well. "*Beware of the scribes who walk about in long robes.....to take the front seats in the synagogues and the places of honour at banquets; these are the men who swallow the property of widows, while making a show of lengthy prayers.*" Beware of nationalism and militarism, the pursuit of money and wealth at all costs. Beware of becoming too closely associated with men of power. Beware of colluding with the glorification of war.

Remembrance Day at its best is exemplified for me, not by men in fancy uniforms, parading around war memorials, but by the poor widow in today's gospel. Remembrance Day at its best is about giving away everything that we possess. Remembrance Day at its best is about giving our very selves away, our very lives, for the greater good, for true *freedom of heart*, and for the benefit of future generations.

Remembrance Day at its best is about sacrifice and atonement. *Since we only die once and after that comes judgement, so Christ, too, offers himself only once to take the faults of many on himself.*

It is our unique vocation as Christians to share in the death of Christ, to offer ourselves in and with him, to be with Christ, to assist Christ as he takes *the faults of many on himself*.

As Christians, we have this amazing opportunity to make a difference. Our lives, our deaths, can actually contribute towards forgiveness and healing. We can turn the other cheek and take the sting out of conflict. We can try to atone for all the evil that humanity continues to commit. In our living and our dying we can be at one with God our Saviour and with our brothers and sisters everywhere.

This is what Remembrance Day means for me. We will remember them. We will pray for them. We pray that they will now enter not a *man-made sanctuary*, war memorial or cenotaph, but *heaven itself*, that they will now *appear in the actual presence of God on our behalf*.

So, take another look at the window in the south aisle, and, in the words of Elijah, *Do not be afraid*. Do not be afraid to give yourself away in and with Jesus on that Cross.