

## Reflection for November 8, 2020

### **World Beyond War**

*For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have died.*

*For this reason they are before the throne of God, and worship him day and night within his temple, and the one who is seated on the throne will shelter them. They will hunger no more, and thirst no more; the sun will not strike them, nor any scorching heat; for the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of the water of life, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”*

May the peace of the Lord be with you always.

Let us pray:

*Lord, we pray for the power to be gentle, the strength to be forgiving, the patience to be understanding, and the endurance to accept the consequences of holding to what we believe to be right. May we put our trust in the power of good to overcome evil and the power of love to overcome hatred. We pray for the ability to dream and the faith to believe in a world where fear shall no longer lead people to commit injustice, nor selfishness make them bring suffering to others. Help us to devote our whole lives, our thoughts and energies, to the task of making peace, praying always for the inspiration and the power to fulfill the destiny for which we and all people were created. We ask all this in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

The month of November is a time when the Christian community remembers its dead and when the nation remembers its fallen. During November the church's liturgy celebrates the feast of All Saints, commemorates all the faithful departed, and the nation falls silent to

remember the sacrifice all those who faithfully lived and served and died.

The central theme running through these solemn remembrances is hope. Two of the most important elements within hope are memory and imagination. It is imagination that sparks off hope, and memory, which keeps hope alive. To be sure, there are other dimensions to hope, such as trust, love, story, and a creation-centered faith. We need to rehabilitate the importance of memory. Memory enables the past to influence the present. To remember is to make alive what has been cut off from us through death.

The kind of memory we are talking about here is not that which simply recalls the good old days, nor is it sentimental. Instead it is the memory that is true to the past in a manner that has power to disrupt and interrupt the coziness of the present. It is the memory that has the capacity to interrupt the turmoil of the present. Above all, the memory in question is one that enables us to realize that the way we are is not the way we have to be.

By remembering the dead we recover something of the fundamental unity and solidarity of the whole human family. I cannot hope alone—but I can begin to hope in solidarity with the dead and the living. As the Irish Catholic theologian, Father Dermot Lane, observes, “Memory is an important ingredient in the construction of human identity and the shaping of human consciousness. A balanced understanding of who we are arises out of our capacity to be connected through memory with the past. Memory enables the past to influence the present. To remember is to make alive what has been cut off from us through death. To disconnect ourselves from the past is to cut ourselves off from one of the important sources of human identity. We are what we are in virtue of our dead. Those who sever their solidarity with the dead all too quickly end up severing their solidarity with the living. This, in

turn, leads to hopeless forms of individualism symbolized in the self-sufficiency of self.”

In his magnificent book, *The Fight For History: 75 Years of Forgetting, Remembering, and Remaking Canada’s Second World War*, Tim Cook writes: “In the fight for our history, we are the guardians of the past. Cultivating meaningful memory, engaging in acts of remembrance, ensuring that events, deeds and individuals are not forgotten—all of this takes work. The dykes of memory are always crumbling and there are too few involved in the spadework to shore them up. Often historians, both amateur and professional, uncover acts of heroism, self-sacrifice, and courage that go hand in hand with hurt, loss, and trauma. History is messy, tangled, and complex; it is unsettled and contradictory. It takes effort to understand, and its meaning changes from generation to generation. But we must push back against apathy and indifference. We must tell our stories, truthfully and bravely. For if we do not embrace our history, no one else will.”

If it is true to say that memory is a vital ingredient in hope, then it is equally true to assert that it is imagination that sustains hope. Imagination is not about the fanciful projection of an unreal world. Imagination is about knowing and understanding the world around us. It is about the capacity to construct new and alternative possibilities out of our experience of the world in which we live. It is this irrepressible capacity to imagine—image!—life differently that keeps hope alive. Hope arises when my little imagination is enlarged by the imagination of others. It is only in and through the collaboration, or mutuality, of imaginations that hope can emerge and counter the temptation to despair.

By remembering the dead, with hope for them and ourselves, it is the imagination that enables us to envision a world beyond war and to go beyond the cynicism and apathy that are so characteristic of life today.

Let us pray:

*Remembering the generations who have gone before us, we gather to worship you, O God. Remembering the many who gave their lives so that we might be free, we have come to this hour of peace to worship you. Remembering all who have suffered loss and grief in the name of war, we have come to this service of peace to worship you.*

*Remembering all who continue to live in the midst of violence, we offer our gifts of peace to worship you. In Jesus' name we pray, ever the Prince of Peace. Amen.*

*Rev. Bill Cantelon*