

**ADDRESS GIVEN BY THE REV'D GLENN MAYTUM AT THE  
REMEMBRANCE DAY SERVICE 11<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2021.**

Tucked away behind red doors at 36 rue Albert Thomas in the 10<sup>th</sup> arrondissement of Paris is the church of St Martin-des-champs (St Martin in the Fields). As you enter through one of those red doors, to your right is a marble memorial noting that the Archbishop of Paris and his retinue came to that church to offer thanks for the signing of the Armistice, which was enacted on the feast day of St Martin: the former Roman soldier who became a Soldier for Christ. Martin is the Patron Saint of France. 11<sup>th</sup> November is Martinmass.

I reached that church after having already seen the red poppies in the fields of northern France and Belgium where my grandfather had served in the 14<sup>th</sup> reinforcements of the First Battalion of the Australian Imperial Force: from Pozieres to WIPERS (as he called Ypres). In that area the words of the poem by the Canadian McCrae which we have had read to us this morning, became real to me seeing the countryside dotted by tiny and huge cemeteries and massive memorials at Vimy for the Canadians; Thiepval for the English; Fromelles for the Australians, as well as for Indian, Irish, South African, Basques, Czechs, Poles, Newfoundlanders, Irish, the French and the extraordinary German cemetery outside Arras.

I saw the many Crosses of Sacrifice and the Stones of Remembrance the Commonwealth Graves Commission have placed there.

And, the red poppies. Red is a recurring colour. The blood-red poppies have become the symbol of Remembrance. It is quite overwhelming.

Then, in London, when entering the Great West Door of Westminster Abbey, one is confronted by the Tomb of the Unknown Warrior, returned home from France, a reminder of the heroism of self-sacrifice, also surrounded with its blood-red poppies that speak of the cruel futility of war.

So, to today.

We entered St James' to see in front of us the reminders of a fallen world: and it comes as a surprise to many visitors to see the prominently positioned Honour Boards and the King's and Regimental Colours, as we enter this Holy Place. This place contains memorials to many generations of both church and state -just look at the walls around us. A witness, when you read them, to so much of our young nation's history.

As we entered St James' we passed, on the walls, the permanent reminder of that darkness that fallen humanity is capable of imposing.

However, we don't stop there.

We move through the building from west to east: from the reminder of the violence and pain humans have frequently inflicted on each other into light, colour and smell of worship, in which we glimpse week-by-week, a future of sanctity, fulfilment and rest as we join together in prayer and praise, reminding us of the relationship and dignity for which we are created.

And, yes, today more red poppies!

Does it seem strange that death and violence and sadness and mourning are memorialised in this building or Westminster Abbey or St Martin's in Paris?

Not at all.

If Christianity is "good news" about anything, it has to be good news about life.

These buildings are how we see faith. We learn faith NOT just in our minds and memories, but also from drawing inspiration from our senses and imagination. The Letter of James tells us that faith is what we think and say and do. In His death on the Cross, Jesus' sacrifice brought humankind back into relationship with God the Creator.

The symbols we see today of the cross marked out in the floor design we followed as we walked in and the altar at the east of our viewpoint are the SAME symbols we see in those cemeteries and places of remembrance in Europe and across the world.

We recall from our Bible reading that the great sacrifice made by so many in the Wars is a spending of life, of their very selves, a thing done in the service of their "neighbour".

This church, consecrated nearly 200 years ago as a site of worship, has been able to deal with national memory in complexity and grief as these memorials, in the wording we see used, talk about the human person, fallible and fragile, at times capable of great violence, yet made for glory and renewal. A silent reminder to us all of mortality and judgement.

As we meet here today, 11<sup>th</sup> November 2021, we give thanks for their sacrifice, not only for the 60,000 Aussies who died in World War I, but for those in World War II, Korea, Malaya, Vietnam, Sarajevo, Bougainville, Afghanistan, all theatres of conflict where Service Personnel have been engaged, and, as Peace Keepers, and on this Remembrance Day, the first in two decades when no Australian is in an active conflict zone, we pray for peace: in the world, at home, in Australia, in our families, within ourselves, with our God, and for the estimated 50,000 Service Personnel who now suffer p.t.s.d.

The Armistice may have been a cessation of hostilities, but history shows it certainly did not lead to peace!

The Anglican blessing, which my grandfather and so many of our Servicemen and women would have heard Chaplains pronounce over the years says we long for "A peace which passes all understanding".

So, as we gather amongst and wearing our red poppies, linking us to so many people in places big and small across the world today, may we always be grateful for the life we are each able to lead, and may we never forget their sacrifice.