

Homily for the 33rd Sunday of the Year – Remembrance Sunday

This is the penultimate Sunday of this liturgical year and the major theme of the scripture for today is the end of time. At first sight the passages do not make for comfortable reading because they speak of unparalleled distress and utter devastation that will take place during the last days. However, biblical faith maintains that good will ultimately triumph over evil, and most importantly, at the end of time evil will be completely destroyed and the reign of God will endure unchallenged for ever. This is at the heart of our Christian faith as we remember that Jesus' life ended in apparent defeat with his death on the cross. The powers of evil, many thought, had won. But, and it is a huge but, his death was not the end, he was raised from the dead, and death has no power over him. If this was not so we would not be here celebrating Mass today.

Today is also Remembrance Sunday when as a Nation we collectively remember and give thanks for those who gave the ultimate sacrifice of their lives in various wars and conflicts that have been such a massive part of the past century and more. At the 10.30 Mass this Sunday all those present will be invited to say together: ***They shall not grow old as we grow old. Age shall not weary them nor the years condemn. At the going down of the sun and in the morning we shall remember them.*** Literally millions of men and women have died fighting for their country, or have been tortured and killed in Latin and Central America for their non-violent struggle against oppression. We who live in safety, prosperity and peace owe them a huge debt of gratitude, best paid by refusing to resort to violence, as Jesus did throughout his life.

In the Catholic tradition November is the month of remembering all those who have died. The month began with the celebration of All Saints when we thank God for all those, canonised, beatified and anonymous saints who are now sharing life with God in a way that we can only imagine. The following day we prayed for those, who, for whatever reason are not as yet seeing God in this way, but hope to do so. It is also part of our Catholic tradition that our prayers for them can help this process. There are now more than 400 names in the Book of Remembrance which will remain here in front of the altar throughout the month of November and is a visible reminder of our remembering in prayer those who have died. I was struck by one entry which simply said, 'For those with no-one to pray for them.' Eternal rest give unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. May they rest in peace. Amen

One final thought, we often take for granted the ability to remember but we also know that there are an increasing number of people who lose that capacity through one or other form of dementia. For them and for their families and carers the progression through the various stages of dementia can seem like a living death from which there is no escape. As a Church, indeed as human beings, we are invited to do what we can to support them with our prayers, with our love and in many other practical ways, for example the Dementia Carers' Support Group that meets in our Parish Centre. They may have lost the capacity to remember but let's make sure they are not forgotten.

Bidding Prayers for the 33rd Sunday of the Year – Remembrance Sunday

Celebrant:

It is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead – with these words in our minds and hearts we turn to God in prayer.

Reader:

For the Church – that in this month of November the Church will proclaim with confidence and joy the resurrection of the dead and the gift of eternal life.

Lord in your mercy

For political leaders, especially in those countries where there is violence and hostility – that reflecting on the devastation of war they will do all they can to bring about lasting peace throughout the world.

Lord in your mercy

For the success of COP26 – that the pledges made and the monies promised to those at most risk from climate change will be followed through and become realities which will bring about much needed change.

Lord in your mercy

For those who have died in war – that they will receive the gift of eternal life and that we who live in peace will do all we can to seek peaceful solutions to difficult situations.

Lord in your mercy

For all those who have died, all victims of violence, accident, natural disaster and the COVID19 pandemic, for those in the Book of Remembrance and Edith Hunt, Michael Doran, Honorah Kenyon, Harold Huston, Robert Huston, Herbert Ward, Nicholas Hans Friedrich, Ann Whalley and Anthony Yeardsley whose anniversaries occur this week – that they and all who have died may rest in peace and rise in glory.

Lord in your mercy

Either aloud or in silence we pray for our own special intentions...pause...then

Lord in your mercy

We ask the prayers of Mary as we say, Hail Mary...

Celebrant:

May the Lord support us all the day long till the shadows lengthen and evening comes, and the busy world is hushed and the fever of life is over and our work is done. Then in his mercy may he give us a safe lodging and a holy rest and peace at the last. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen