

Anzac Day Address 2020

“Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.” John 15:13

Sacrifice means that one person or group of people is benefitted in some way at the expense of another. One loses, another gains. One gives, another receives. One takes on risk, another enjoys safety. One faces peril, the other is protected. One suffers injury, another has health. One dies, another lives. In war, a price is paid, and like the worth of a life itself, only the omniscient God can put a value on it. Today we remember those who paid the highest price. They shall not be forgotten.

Many right now, in these days of seclusion and separation, are making sacrifices. Some feel like they are being sacrificed, their jobs, their careers, their businesses and retirements, their hopes and their dreams. To many, the future is filled with uncertainty and even fear. Yet, how small are our sacrifices compared to what many of those who went to war had to surrender? How minor are our deprivations compared with what they had to forfeit?

Being separated from family and loved ones during these times of restriction helps us understand more empathetically the heartache of those who went to conflict. Combat always comes with the possibility of mortality, a confronting truth to face, and often with little time to do it. Many went off to battle not knowing that the psychological struggle, the spiritual contest, might be even more severe than the physical conflict. The warrior must come to terms, one way or another, sooner or later, with the possibility of never seeing loved ones, home, and family again.

The warrior must be prepared to meet his or her Maker. The ultimate test of someone's integrity is measured by their actions under threat of mortality. Does self-preservation or sacrifice rule in the heat of battle? The Almighty doesn't require flawlessness. He knows we are flesh and blood, weak-in-the-knees, faint of heart, have feet of clay. In the real world of war there are no comic book superheroes. But there are noble warriors. And they are not rare birds. Each one who puts duty and country before personal well-being is just such a dutiful servant. They shall not be forgotten.

War causes upheaval. It changes lives. World War 1, World War 2, Korea, Vietnam, Afghanistan, many other conflicts altered the lives not only of the soldiers, but of those who kept the home fires burning. Families were shattered, lives were ruined, dreams were lost. Yet through these sacrifices, others prospered and the freedoms we enjoy were protected. Our liberties were established and maintained. They shall not be forgotten.

ANZAC Day remembrances should always teach us anew how exceedingly precious life is. We take it for granted so easily. We abuse its privileges. We demand submission to our own ideals, to our own expectations and parameters of liberty. So, lest we fallaciously think we are entitled to liberty, our remembrance calls us back to gratitude. We have nothing that we are not finally given, and that from God. We don't finally have the power to preserve our own freedoms and livelihoods. We entrust that to our gracious Lord.

Yes, there are still vexing questions. Why does God work as He does? We are not privy to the details. One person is healed while another is taken. One family experiences tragedy while another lives carefree. One person suffers loss while another prospers. All this makes God *appear* unpredictable, almost fickle. How can God avoid the verdict of favouritism! Logic cannot answer these mysteries and only faith can endure them. Sometimes God loves the individual at what *appears* to be the expense of the greater community. Other times the individual *seems* to suffer on behalf of the common good. Yet God is not a distant dictator decreeing arbitrary laws. He immersed Himself in the disorder of humanity, its frailty and

fallenness. In the person of Jesus Christ God did not sanitize death. He endured it. He suffered through it and He conquered it.

“This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.” 1 John 4:10 “Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.” John 15:13 “This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down His life for us.” 1 John 3:16 The world is not free from conflict. And some will use our extraordinary circumstances to disadvantage the distracted or the weak. Still, we have the presence and promise of Him for whom all the fury and savagery of men is no threat. May the merciful God, for sake of His Son give us the determination to pursue peace, the courage to value life, the means to protect the vulnerable, and the respect necessary to properly honour the fallen.

Prayer

Merciful Lord God, giver and restorer of life, at this hour of solemn observance we recognise the sacrifice of those who paid the ultimate price. We commend to you our reflections made with the help of words and those silent meditations that rest deep within caring hearts. Bless those families and individuals affected by the legacy of conflict and war. Embrace them in Your love. Guide the leaders of our nation. Equip them with wisdom and arm them with integrity. Favour us with your divine love for the sake of Him who gave His life in sacrifice for all. Amen.