

Homily for Remembrance Sunday.

John 14:27; James 3:17&18; 1John 1:5; Psalm 23; Matthew 5: 1-12.

Title: 'Remembering'.

A central theme of Remembrance Sunday is clearly that of remembering, most especially remembering today, all those who, in the service of their country and in the fight against evil and oppressive regimes, gave up their own lives so that we may live in freedom. Important and vital as this act of remembrance is, remembering is not just something we do on this day once a year. Remembering is something that permeates the whole of our lives. Why, I wonder, do we remember? **Remembering is central to the learning process.** Without it, every time we tried to do anything, we would always be starting with a blank sheet of paper. We would make the same mistakes over and over again. This is not just true for us as individuals, but also for communities of which we are a part. **Remembering helps give us a sense of identity,** of helping us know who we are. That is why it is so challenging for those who have difficulties with their memories. In a sense, we are formed by the people who have gone before us. And this is just as true for faith groups as it is for nations.

For the Jewish people, there were two significant events that helped shape them as a people. The first was their **deliverance from slavery**, which although led them to spending many years journeying through the wilderness, ultimately led to them becoming settled in a country which they could call their own. The second was their **deliverance from exile** in Babylon. A key part of their liturgies is to remember these transformative and life changing events and to be reminded of their absolute dependence upon God. Since the second world war a third significant event has been added, the horrors of extermination in the concentration camps. Although as we all know, many millions were killed, the Jewish nation and faith survive.

For Christians the key person upon which our faith is built is **Jesus Christ** who as the Son of God, we believe gives us a window into God himself. The key event which is at

the very centre of our faith is **the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead**. We believe that this does not just assure us of ultimate delivery from all that seeks to enslave us here on earth, but of delivery from earthly death itself. I don't want to be misunderstood here. Just as we are all born, so one day we will all die. But because of Jesus' resurrection, we know that earthly death is no longer the end of our existence, but a stage we pass through on the way to enjoying Eternal Life in all its fullness. Because of his resurrection, **we believe that Jesus continues to walk with each one of us** every step of our journey of life which takes us through death to new life. **One of the ways that we are reminded of this is through an act of remembrance** such as we share in every time we attend Mass. The night before he died, in blessing the bread and wine, Jesus commanded us to do this in remembrance of him. And in following his command, the presence of Jesus becomes real for us again in Word and in Sacrament.

Our collective sense of identity is not just transmitted through our belief systems and political ideologies but in our artistic and scientific endeavours, in our culture. When dictatorial regimes seek to impose their will on others, one of the first things that they attack is a representation of a nation's art. Books are burnt, sculptures are pulled down, buildings are destroyed. Music is silenced. But the opposite is also true. The remembered and shared art of the people can be used to defy those who would seek to impose their will on others proclaiming that even if their bodies can be imprisoned or worse, **the spirit of individuals and communities can never be vanquished**. Through our culture, our nation and our faith, that is what we proclaim afresh today.

Fr Gregory Clifton-Smith