

Remembrance Day / Defence Sunday

Liturgical Resources

Introduction

11th November 1919 The First Two-Minute silence in London:

The first stroke of eleven produced a magical effect. The tram cars glided into stillness, motors ceased to cough and fume, and stopped dead, and the mighty-limbed dray horses hunched back upon their loads and stopped also, seeming to do it of their own volition. Someone took off his hat, and with a nervous hesitancy the rest of the men bowed their heads also. Here and there an old soldier could be detected slipping unconsciously into the posture of 'attention'. An elderly women, not far away, wiped her eyes, and the man beside her looked white and stern. Everyone stood very still. The hush deepened. It had spread over the whole city and become so pronounced as to impress one with a sense of audibility. It was a silence which was almost pain. And the spirit of memory brooded over it all.

From the Manchester Guardian, 12 November 1919.

On this Remembrance Day we will spend some time in grateful thought for the sacrifice of those whose sacrifice preserved for us the freedoms that we enjoy and honour their memory in the laying of wreaths our silence and our prayers.

We will begin with a famous poem by Colonel John McCrae

Background – McCrae

It was summer, 1915. World War I. English and French armies had dug in their heels against the bulldozer onslaught of the German army as it ploughed its way across the plains of Flanders. After a day of ferocious fighting following the second battle of Ypres, the sun rose on a relatively quiet battlefield. Col. John McCrae cautiously poked his head above the security of his trench to be met with the horrifying sight of row upon row of makeshift crosses littering the plains before him: ghostly reminders of the grim aftermath of the earlier battle marking the graves of the fallen. McCrae, a Canadian veteran of the Second Boer War and professor of medicine at McGill University in Montreal, was struck with admiration at the courage of the dead and overwhelmed by awe at their selflessness as he caught sight of the tiny, red poppies dancing lazily in the gentle breeze among the grave markers of his fallen comrades. Inspired by the sight, and by the memories of the previous days of vicious fighting, McCrae grabbed a pad of paper and pen and quickly began to write down the words that had suddenly appeared in his mind. In minutes, his creation was complete:

Poem: *In Flanders fields*

*In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.
We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders fields.
Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.*

By Col. John McCrae

Background – McCrae continued

McCrae's fellow commanders read the poem and encouraged him to publish it. He submitted his simple poem to Britain's famous Punch magazine, which readily published it in a rarely-used bold type. The effects of the poem washed across Britain like a giant wave. All of Britain was moved and encouraged by the words, and the poem quickly spread throughout the allied nations. The poppy became a symbol of 'Life' and 'Resurrection': the red petals were the colour of the blood that stained the battlefield; the yellow/black centre represented the mud and desolation; the green of the stem became representative of the forests and fields where generations of men have died to make their land free; the stem itself symbolised the courage of the fallen soldiers. Life and freedom, all in this tiny, overlooked flower. In 1918, a seriously-wounded Col. John McCrae was carried by stretcher to a rear base hospital on the coast of France and placed in a room where he might look out the window toward the Dover cliffs across the channel. He died three nights later.

McCrae's final words, according to his doctor, were: "Tell them this, if ye break faith with us who die, we shall not sleep."

Colonel John McCrae was buried in the cemetery of Wimereux.

Let us say 'The reply' together:

*Rest now in peace, you Flanders' dead.
The fight that you so bravely led
We've taken up. And we will keep
True faith with you who lie asleep In Flanders' fields.
Fear not that you have died for naught.
The torch you threw to us we caught.
Ten million hands will hold it high,
And Freedom's light shall never die!*

Alternate Introduction

We are gathered here in the sight of God, as loyal citizens of Australia, to honour the memory of those who have made the supreme sacrifice while serving our nation in time of war or peace-keeping operations. As we stand at this hour, let us offer thanks to God for the remembrance of the sacrifices made by the original Anzacs and countless others before and since then; and for the countless blessings granted to our people in peace and war. Let us give thanks for our democratic system of government, and pray that God may continue to bless us with freedom and peace. Finally, let us dedicate ourselves to serve others as faithfully as those who have gone before us. In silence let us be conscious of God's presence with us.

Prayers

For our Nation

Almighty God, we pray for our nation. May we always walk in the paths of truth and honour; may we be a beacon light to all nations, who struggle for self-government and freedom. Strengthen our leaders that they may govern us soberly and sincerely and so fulfil their heavy responsibilities. Make us a just people, wanting other nations to have the same privileges we claim for ourselves. Help us to honour our native soil with sound manners at home and abroad. Grant this for Jesus Christ's sake. **Amen**

For Peace

God of peace and love, you have made of one blood all nations to dwell upon the earth, and by your Son, Jesus Christ, have broken down the walls of partition between race and race. Break down afresh all that divides us from one another. Temper our pride; sham our jealousies; and do away all prejudice, that the bonds of fellowship and mutual service may unite the east and west, the north and south, that we may live together in perpetual peace to the glory of your name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Sovereign Lord, We pray for peace in this troubled world.
Prosper the activities of those who work to preserve human rights.
Promote the endeavours of all who work for reconciliation and justice.
Deliver us from the forces of malice, jealousy and fear.
Direct us into the ways of understanding, cooperation and mutual respect.
Lord, bless all peacemakers.
Lord, sustain all peace keepers.
Break down all barriers of ignorance, suspicion and fear.
Build up those things that make for peace, justice and freedom. **Amen**

Defence Chaplains

Lord God of Hosts, we pray for your priests whom you have called to the ministry of uniformed Chaplaincy, and for those who proclaim your love and compassion on battlefields and Defence establishments where Australian military personnel serve. Lord, strengthen their faith as they seek to witness to you in the secular world. Protect them from all dangers and comfort them in the long separations from their families and the familiar things of church that they must endure. Lord who blessed the peacemakers, bless especially those chaplains serving overseas, helping to bring peace to nations new and old which are struggling to find their identity and place in the world. We ask in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen**

Of Remembrance

Almighty God, king over all, who in the multitude of your mercies has brought us to this day, we thank you for all your goodness and loving kindness. For the gracious providence that guided and sustained us in the dark days of war and for the defence you raised up for us in our time of need we thank and praise you. For the grace that upheld us through the years of peril and sorrow and for the final deliverance you gave us we praise and bless your holy name. We cried out to you in trouble and you heard us: we put our trust in you and were given courage and confidence. Grant Lord that we, remembering your great goodness, may give ourselves in new obedience to your holy will and live as your faithful children; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns and is worshipped and glorified with you, Father, and the Holy Spirit, one God, for evermore. **Amen**

Eternal God,
Before whom generations rise and fall,
Have mercy upon human folly and failure.
We acknowledge the power of human greed, fear and jealousy;
We acknowledge the aggression and pretence of nations.
Forgive those sins that lead to war.
Almighty God, today we remember ...

We remember the courage and patriotism of men and women
Who resisted evil and defended freedom.
Help us to value the freedom eventually won
That we may use it wisely
So that people and nations may live together in harmony and freedom
And face the future with confidence and hope.
We ask this prayer in the name of Jesus Christ. **Amen**

An Act of Remembrance

In the quietness of this time we remember the sounds of the battlefield,
the despair of defeat, the deprivations of captivity.
We remember those who paid the supreme sacrifice,
all who lie buried in distant lands.
We remember all who have been engaged in defending freedom,

their bravery and dedication, their patriotism and humour, their resourcefulness and hope.
We remember sailors, soldiers and airmen, nurses, ancillary workers and civilians who suffered.
We remember ordinary Australians from such places as Albany or Atherton, from Balmain or Burnie, from Geelong or Gawler,
sons and daughters, husbands and wives,
fathers and mothers, lovers and relatives
who served the nation in time of war.
Lord, we remember them;
we honour them;
we are grateful;
we are free.

Almighty God, king over all, who in the multitude of your mercies has brought us to this day, we thank you for all your goodness and loving kindness. For the gracious providence that guided and sustained us in the dark days of war and for the defence you raised up for us in our time of need we thank and praise you. For the grace that upheld us through the years of peril and sorrow and for the final deliverance you gave us we praise and bless your holy name. We cried out to you in trouble and you heard us: we put our trust in you and were given courage and confidence. Grant Lord that we, remembering your great goodness, may give ourselves in new obedience to your holy will and live as your faithful children; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns and is worshipped and glorified with you, Father, and the Holy Spirit, one God, for evermore. **Amen**

The Commemoration

Almighty God, we thank you for all those who did not count their lives dear to themselves but laid them down for our sakes. Let the memory of their devotion and sacrifice always be an example to us, that we may live as faithful servants of him who died for our eternal salvation. We look forward with thanksgiving to that time when we will join, with all who have died in the faith, in the joy of your heavenly kingdom; where sorrow and pain are no more and where every tear will be wiped away. In Jesus' name we pray. **Amen**