

Sermon from Bishop Michael Gorick, Bishop of Dudley.

Today is Remembrance Sunday. Sometimes remembering is hard.

In the quiet at the back of church, waiting for the service to begin, I thought of Joe. Joe had been a member of the church youth group where I was Vicar. He'd been in the army cadets and at nineteen won a place at Sandhurst. Before going he volunteered to go to Afghanistan where after two weeks he was blown apart by a roadside bomb, and killed. He was a precious child. A lovely young man. One of so many being remembered today.

100 years ago, on 11th November 1920, the Cenotaph War Memorial was unveiled in Whitehall. On the same Day the Unknown Soldier was laid to rest in Westminster Abbey. The war had ended two years before, but the nation was still deep in grief. Many were still in shock at all they had lost. The familiar world, the pre-war world of before was gone, with thousands upon thousands of young men now, or had returned injured and traumatised to their families. I knew an old lady, who received a telegram saying her husband had been killed, on the very day her daughter was born. We live in strange times now. But their world of normality had been destroyed. Hopes and dreams dismembered, just as those young men had been left dis-membered in the fields of France.

Today is Remembrance Sunday. Remembering can be hard, but is important. And it's an interesting word when you think about it. It sounds like it's the opposite of dis-membering. To dis-member something means to pull it apart, leaving it destroyed. When we lose someone we love we can feel broken apart like that.

But when we re-member someone we do what the word suggests. As we re-member the person we loved, then, in a way, they are put together again in our hearts and minds. As we remember them, we can, in a sense, carry them within us. All that was good about them is then not lost forever, but lives on, in some way, through us.

And in church, usually, we can come together at Holy Communion to 'Do this in remembrance of him'. We remember our Lord Jesus Christ who laid down his life, not just for his friends, not even just for his country, but for those from every race and language, of every people and nation. Jesus, whose body was broken, that we might be whole.

As we remember him, and bring to him our broken lives, our heartaches and longings, He re-members us, puts us back together, to walk in his Way. For now, we are his Body here on earth, it is our hands that are to bring his touch of love, our feet that go about to do his will, our eyes to look on this broken world with his compassion. He is indeed re-membered through us his people, his love seen in action here, and outside this place, in our daily lives.

So today I remember Joe, and all those countless others who have been killed, injured or traumatised by war. I remember their families and all who mourn and remember them today and every day. I remember all who are suffering in this Pandemic, who likewise bear such grief, illness and loss. We remember all who have died in 2020, especially those denied a normal funeral in these strange times. We remember and honour them today. Jesus, who re-members us, puts us back together, as we remember Him. Jesus who holds all souls living and departed in His one eternal light. It is to Him we come to pledge ourselves today to live and work for a New Tomorrow where hatred, division, war and injustice will be no more, but life and love will be all in all. As we remember His words:

"Love one another as I have loved you."

