**Give Peace a Chance (Nov 10th, Remembrance Sunday)**

**Psalm 85:8-13, Matthew 5:1-11**

2021 marks the 100 year anniversary of the poppy. In 1921 Madame Anna Guérin, later christened "The Poppy Lady from France", was inspired by John McCrae's poem, "In Flanders Fields".

She had an idea to sell artificial silk poppies as a way to raise money for Veterans' needs, and to remember those who had given their lives during the First World War. In July of that year, the Great War Veterans Association adopted the Poppy as the flower of Remembrance. And, since then, the Legion and its members have upheld this tradition of Remembrance.

If you watch the video for our Young and Young At Heart posted on our website later today – you’ll see a story about the first poppy and Madam Guerin.

And looking out, I can see that we are all wearing our poppies today.

It’s fitting then to tell you a story that appeared in a comic strip called “For Better or Worse”. It’s about a mother who buys a poppy for her young daughter called April. As she pins it on her daughter, April asks, ‘*why do we wear poppies?*’

So, her mother explains about the poem called “In Flanders Field”. Then April asks, ‘*why do I have to wear a poppy when I don’t really know what war is?*’

The mother gives the little girl a hug and says, ‘*perhaps not knowing what war is, is the best reason of all for this act of remembrance*.’

I wonder how many young people will be wearing poppies this week?

And I am guessing that most, if not all of them, have no firsthand knowledge of war and suffering.

Wouldn’t you agree?

Unfortunately, though, there are millions of children, who know the horror of war too well.

For many people war is the normal state of existence. You may have heard of the term ‘outbreak of war’ – well for many it would be wonderful release to have ‘an outbreak of peace.’

It is a scary thought, but in the last 3400 years, only 268 of them have been entirely at peace! 268 might seem like a big number, but it’s just 8% of all time in recorded history. WOW!

Conflict is so prevalent, that some people now believe that war is a normal human condition.

And it is true that we are quick to defend our property, our rights, and our privileges.

If we hear a harsh word from someone, our response is often to say a harsher word back, or perhaps a clever put down, or maybe even

a physical response.

And yet, we come here today, on Remembrance Sunday, not to remember war and violence, but to remember the peace and the freedom that people have fought for.

We come here today to remember the revolutionary message from the one we call Prince of Peace – Jesus Christ. He said

*“Blessed are the peace makers, for they will be called Children of God.”*

(Matthew 5:9)

Sometimes at Remembrance Day we focus our thoughts on all those who fought for this country – their sacrifice and their willingness to give their lives.

But sometimes we lose the focus of the reason why those lives were lost.

Why those people were willing to die.

Sometimes we do not remember to see our armed forces as ‘peacemakers and children of God.’

And sometimes we forget that we too are called to be peace makers.

In fact, I would suggest that the best way to perhaps honor and remember our veterans, is to continue to live in the path of peace that they fought for.

There is a world organization called “the World Peace Flame”. It is built on a vision of a peaceful future. Their dream is:

*“Imagine if every man, woman and child, in every nation and country, from every religion and creed, were united in peace.”* <https://www.worldpeaceflame.org/>

I’ll say that again.

*“Imagine if every man, woman and child, in every nation and country, from every religion and creed, were united in peace.”*

That is quite a dream!

Peace flames have been built and lit in communities on all five continents around the world. As the flames burn, countries unite in this dream of a peaceful future.

The former Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kofi Anann, said,

***"Together we can build a better world for succeeding generations, if we only summon the will. We are each responsible, in our own way, for nurturing the culture of peace for the sake of our children and grandchildren."***

There is a deep truth in this statement.

Each of us are responsible for our own acts of peace.

Our lives need to be filled with loving kindness and thoughts of how to be a person of peace.

In our world today, where racism is rampant, being a person of peace means standing up for all who are oppressed. For people who are treated unjustly because of their skin color, their sexuality, their religion, their economic status, age and ability.

Being a person of peace means that we are not to be silent bystanders and watch as injustice occurs around us.

Jesus tells us ‘We are called to be loving and pure in heart.

We are called to show mercy and forgiveness, even when we are insulted and persecuted.

We are called to be peacemakers.

The motto of the World Peace Flame is:

*“Nothing we do changes the past, but everything we do now creates the future."*

In our act of Remembrance today and tomorrow, let us pause to remember the past – but let us also pause to make a promise to ‘do our bit’ in creating a future of peace.

It begins with each one of us.

I invite you now to reflect on that thought, as we silently watch this video. The words of the song remind us of the ways that we can show honor: by loving, forgiving and giving.

Let their stories make a difference for peace on earth.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TaRsOPf3M5s>

Amen.