

## REFLECTION – 8 November (Remembrance Sunday)

### Reading: John 15:9-17

The text for the sermon verses 12-14:

“I demand that you love each other as much as I love you. And here is how to measure it—the greatest love is shown when a person lays down his life for his beloved; and you are my beloved if you obey me.”

It is November. It is this time of the year when the trees shed their leaves – it is the time of year when we remember the sacrifice of many soldiers past, and present.

And just like the leaves fall from the trees, and lie on the ground to change colour and shape and be trampled on and eventually disappear; just like that, war after war, conflict after conflict, soldiers fall...and die...

- During World War 1, in *nature* the seasons were changing as they normally do, but in the *lives* of all those involved, the leaves were falling down from the trees all the time.
- During the battles that followed, soldiers fell like autumn leaves fall from the trees.
- During World War 2, soldiers fell like autumn leaves fall from the trees.
- During the conflicts/wars that followed, soldiers fell like autumn leaves fell from the trees.
- In different parts of the world today, soldiers are falling like autumn leaves fall from the trees.
- And as we speak innocent civilians are falling like autumn leaves fall from the trees.....

Bullets and bombs are stripping people's lives bare, are ripping families apart, and are robbing people from a safe place to live.

Autumn after autumn we see the same thing happen in nature – a beautiful, majestic landscape of warm, bright colours transforming into something bare and brown. It's very predictable, we know what follows namely winter.

You would think that after all these years, people would learn what the outcome of conflict and war is, too... But over and over and over again

violence and hatred and misunderstandings lead to the start of a proverbial winter in people's lives, sometimes a winter that never ends.

Remembrance Day is there to prevent us from just raking all the leaves together, discarding and forgetting about them, because those who have fallen went to fight for what they believed in, for places and people they loved. So we need to remember them. We shouldn't ever allow the cold winter wind to blow our memories of them away forever. We need to remember their sacrifice. We need to remember the full autumn picture of God's love.

There is no word in our vocabulary that is so frequently used as the word *love*. In the Bible the Greek language uses different words to depict the different meanings attached to the word "love".

In our text two Greek words are used namely *agape* – God's love and *phileo* "beloved". The text speaks of "Godly love" as a given. Jesus has a close relationship with his Father through love and therefore between Him and his followers. Jesus says God loved them first. He does not love them because of something they did or did not do. His love is unconditional. In the Greek text *agape* or divine love is a verb. It means that God's love is always love in action.

We should take a leaf out of Jesus' book. Just like so many soldiers, Jesus gave his life for his BELOVED. And he did that so that when we die, we won't be forgotten – we will be transformed to live with God eternally in heaven.

Jesus obeyed God and therefore He could be part of God's love. If his followers obey his commandment, they can also be part of this Godly love as a given. Actually because God loves them so much, it is only natural that they should live the love that they received with joy.

We don't need to **DIE** to give our lives for others, we can **LIVE** to give our lives for others, by loving them in the same way Jesus did. Friend and enemy alike.

So let us strive to live in peace and harmony with our families, neighbours, friends and enemies, and pray that this attitude will spread all over the world, so that we wouldn't ever have to add the names of our sons and daughters to the lists on MONUMENTS.

So let us not remember the WARS but remember the loving sacrifice of many soldiers past and present. Let us remember that they did what Jesus said namely to love with sacrifice and commitment. And let us follow their example to LOVE – even when it is difficult, when all the odds are against us.

Let us choose love over hate and peace over war. Let's grab all the opportunities we see to love despite all the odds! Yes, let us start loving each other in this Parish and beyond so that when people look at us they see God' love in action. May God help us!

Amen