

they shall beat their swords into ploughshares,
and their spears into pruning-hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war any more. *Isaiah 2.4*

During this last week, I recalled one particular lesson at School. I don't know why. It is not something I have recalled for many years. Our Music master, for some reason I cannot recall, began to speak of his memories as a young soldier involved in the D Day landings. He spoke of marching through a town that had been devastated in the fighting. He recalled passing one particular house; the end wall of which had been blown away. A grand piano was left hanging precariously in what was left of an upstairs lounge.

He spoke of that as an example of how the horror of war had broken into ordinary everyday life. He thought of families that would have gathered around that piano that were now scattered, or very possibly dead.

I thought of my Music master's memory as I have continued to reflect on my time in the Lebanon, itself the theatre of a bloody Civil War in the not too distant past. My mind has gone back to the ruins of a theatre in down town Beirut. As the city has been rebuilt, as fashionable shops and restaurants, the offices of multinational companies have re-appeared, this ruined theatre is being deliberately left as it is; left as a reminder of what war, brutal civil war, did to this city.

Which brings me round to the importance of remembering. On this particular day we remember. On the 100th Anniversary of the 11th day of the 11th month

we stop, as we have for the last 100 years and we remember. We remember sacrifice, we remember courage, we remember suffering, awful suffering that left its mark in ruined cities, broken bodies, broken minds and spirits, grieving families.

We remember with a purpose. The First World War was to be the war that ended all wars. Time and time again we have forgotten the fragility of peace and justice. We have forgotten that these are things that do not happen by chance. They must be actively sought and cherished.

We remember with hope. There is something timeless about the words that we read from Isaiah this morning. It is a lovely example of the scriptures speaking across the barriers of time, of culture; God's word to all people, at all times.

⁴He shall judge between the nations,
and shall arbitrate for many peoples;
they shall beat their swords into ploughshares,
and their spears into pruning-hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war any more. *Isaiah 2.4*

When I was in Finglas, a colleague offered me the gift of a cross that his own Parish at that point did not feel able to accept. Unfortunately, Finglas at that point did not feel able to accept it either. It was a simple brass cross – this cross had been made by a priest of the Church of Ireland who had served as a Chaplain in the First World War. It was fashioned out of spent shell cases; instruments of death and destruction fashioned into a symbol of resurrection, of hope. I never actually saw that cross, but I have often thought of it since. It is a lovely example of symbol expressing a profound truth that goes beyond mere words.

I go back to the ruins of that theatre destroyed in the Lebanese civil war in down town Beirut, a reminder of that dreadful period in their history. This day, on the 100th anniversary of the 11th day, of the 11th month, when the guns finally fell silent on the battle fields of Europe, we remember the sacrifice of those who died, of those who were scarred in body, mind and soul in that awful conflict that was the First World War, we remember with a determination that this must never happen again. Even in the bloodshed that we still see in our broken and hurting world, we remember with hope, that in the fulness of time,

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