

Do you remember when ? That is an invitation to join with someone on a trip back into the past. With memories come a whole load of associations, associations with people, with places. Memories can be happy, can be painful.

Earlier this week the people of Enniskillen remembered the events of 25 years ago. The memories I am sure were very varied. There were those who were present on that day who remember the explosion and the chaos; those who were injured, those who were bereaved. There are some who have been able to move on and embrace the changes that have come in Northern Ireland – others for whom the memories of loved ones have made this too big a step. I thought of the response of the late Gordon Wilson, his amazing words of reconciliation in the wake of the death of his daughter. I recalled at the same time talking to a lady in Ahoghill some ten years later for whom Gordon Wilson's response was still incomprehensible.

I want to think a bit this morning about memories and the process of remembering. On this Remembrance Sunday, in Church services, at War memorials people are remembering. For some the memories are still personal as families remember parents, grandparents, siblings who served, who were injured, who died. For others there is the more general remembering of the awful cost of war. So lest we become too glib about war, the awful cost of war in human suffering, we pause to remember.

Sunday by Sunday, we remember. In bread and wine we remember the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. In Bible readings we remember our salvation history. In our prayers for the Church, the nations, the sick, the marginalised, we remember before God. Each Sunday we remember before God those who have gone before us in the faith, whose anniversaries occur at this time, we give thanks to God for those who have been lights on our own path of faith..

At the 11:00 service we will be welcoming two young children, Eliza McGrath and Leo Ryan, into the fellowship of the Church in Baptism. In the context of the Service of Baptism we will be remembering. Their grandparents may well be remembering Baptisms in earlier years, thinking of the time these parents were themselves children, with their lives before them. In the prayer over the water we recall God's saving acts in the history of Israel, in the person of Jesus Christ. I will sign these children with the sign of the Cross and as I do so the congregation will enjoin them to

confess Christ crucified,
proclaim his resurrection,
look for his coming in glory.

And so we remember. We remember the victims of conflicts in the past; the awful cost of war in broken lives, the cost of the freedoms we enjoy in our own day. Sunday by Sunday, in bread and wine, in word and sacrament, in prayer, in silence we remember our faith story, the journey God makes with his people Israel, God's encounter with man in the life, death and resurrection of Christ.

What does the remembering do? We remember the past – what impact is that to have. It is said that those who forget the past are likely to repeat the mistakes of the past. And so the leaders who emerged from the horror of the last war resolved that never again would the world be consumed by war on such a scale. The immediate post war years saw the emergence of the United Nations Organisation, the fledgling European Common Market. Society must resolve to make the future better than the past or else the sacrifices of the past will be for nothing. For me, our response as individuals and as a society is summed up in the inscription on the war cemetery in Kohima in North East India,

When You Go Home, Tell Them of Us And Say,

For Your Tomorrow, We Gave Our Today

We remember our faith story. In bread and wine we remember, we re-present, we bring into the present, the life, the death, the resurrection of Jesus. We hear once again the faith story, the encounter of God with his people. We hear stories of great faithfulness, stories of failure and judgement and redemption. We hear once again of the ministry of Jesus in word and deed. In his presence, drawing on his strength, we go back out into the world to live our lives as in his presence and in his service.

Today, in Baptism, we will hear parents and godparents make undertakings on behalf of their children. These or equivalent undertakings were made by us or on our behalf at confirmation and baptism. Michael Ramsey, Archbishop of Canterbury as I was growing up, used to refer to the promises of Baptism as his ‘yard stick for life’, of his life as ‘lived in response to my Baptism’

Today we remember. On this Remembrance Sunday we remember the sacrifice of those who died in the great and awful conflicts of the last century. May we as a society, the way we use a freedom that is so often taken for granted, the way we protect those on the margins of our society be our ongoing tribute to those who suffered.

On this and every Sunday we remember in Word and Sacrament our faith story. Strengthened and inspired to go back out into the world to live true to the promises of our Baptism, as servants of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.