

Remembrance Day



Liturgy Canada

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This issue of *Liturgy Canada* tackles head-on the oft time thorny matter of how, in Church, we should or might or could handle the concerns around *Remembrance Day*. There would be no such issue of this publication without the intrepid and always deeply faithful searching by Paul Bosch. Paul is a Lutheran pastor, retired from a rich career, centred mostly on campus ministry, both in the USA and in Canada. Paul is a gifted liturgist, an engaging writer, a thoughtful pilgrim, and a deeply valued questioner of what we do as *church* and why. He is neither shy nor retiring, irrespective of his stage in life, and thinks deeply and works assiduously at his faith, his place in the world, and the role that our churches play in the lives, both individual and communal, which we serve.

We who meet together regularly as the editorial board of *Liturgy Canada* are very grateful that Paul is amongst us – he brings the best to us, and calls the best from us. When we first saw his piece "Rethinking Remembrance Day", it, to no one's surprise, elicited immediate and strong response, even from us! We talked at length and with care about the issue – how it affects us, how we feel, what we might so. We know that it will elicit from our membership equally strong thoughts and reactions.



We are deeply grateful to Marilyn Malton, an active laywoman from Waterloo, ON, and the Director of the Renison Institute of Ministry, for her personal, thoughtful, and faithful piece: *Lest We Forget*. It is a moving and important reflection from Marilyn on her own faith journey and on a personal journey which many of us cannot but imagine. We are not presenting these pieces in any way as a debate which can be 'won' or for which anyone can offer a 'final' word. Rather, they speak of the struggles which all of us have; with the realities of trying to 'remember' while, at the same time, holding a position which many of us consider an ineluctable part of our faith. We are not trying to persuade any to hold to any position nor to take any particular action, save some important critical thinking – asking questions, praying, talking with others.

In the course of preparing for this issue, many of our own editorial board and executive members were moved to offer their own comments and reflections – I offer a *mélange* of these comments, without attribution, simply as a possible way of getting to that important critical thinking which is demanded of us all. Happy reading – happy thinking. May this November 11 find us informed and stretched by these writers and their gifts to us.

Peter Wall is Dean of Christ's Church Cathedral (Anglican) for the Diocese of Niagara, Co-Chair of the Joint Anglican-Lutheran Commission, and member of the Executive of Liturgy Canada.

Rethinking Remembrance Day

Paul Bosch

I won't be wearing a poppy in my lapel this Remembrance Day.

And I'll plan to stay away from parish worship on the Sunday nearest November 11, if there's any hint that Remembrance Day will be celebrated or honoured there. Here's why.

Without in any way intending disrespect to our veterans of the past or present, I want readers of *Liturgy Canada* to know that, for me and for a small but growing percentage of Canadians, Remembrance Day with its poppy has become a partisan symbol of acquiescence to the necessity for war and violence as a solution to human conflicts.

Further: Christian worship, I'll argue, should no longer be celebrating the violence of war, no matter how ingenuously entered into, or how courageously fought. There is in Western societies today an enormously powerful and influential war machine—a War Industry - which I for one intend to resist, with my vote and with my voice. Hence these paragraphs.

It's worth recalling that early Christians were almost invariably pacifists, like today's Mennonites. Then in the Fourth Century, Augustine suggested a way to allow Christians the option of following their leaders into war. His so-called "just war" theory presented five standards by which Christians may determine if the evil and waste caused by war is justifiable:

- 1) **Extremity:** Is this war truly a last resort? Has every diplomatic effort been exhausted to avoid the evils of war, with its violence, destruction, displacement, and loss of life?
- 2) **Legality:** Has this war been legally declared? To be justifiable, this war with its violence cannot be simply a vigilante action.
- 3) **Win-ability:** Can this war actually be won? There is no justification for Christians participating in simple suicidal violence. (Is there any other way to regard the seeming-endless Israeli-Palestinian conflict? Unremitting mutually destructive violence, with no prospect of decisive "victory" for either side?) Can it truthfully be said of any future war - anywhere - that it will be actually win-able?
- 4) **Proportion:** Is the evil and waste of this war - the violence, destruction, displacement and loss of life that this war will cause - likely to be less than the evil this war is attempting to overthrow or to defeat? War, with its violence, destruction, displacement and loss of life, is always waste. Will the waste be worth it?
- 5) **Discrimination:** Can this war avoid involving civilians - especially the elderly, women and children - in the suffering, destruction, dislocations, and loss of life that war necessarily includes? Can the suffering of war be borne by military forces alone? So-called collateral casualties of war's violence are not acceptable for this war to be considered justifiable.

As anyone can see from the above standards, modern warfare, with its indiscriminate aerial bombings, roadside IEDs (improvised explosive devices), land mines, cluster bombs, and suicide missions is simply too horrible to be any longer justifiable. I write as a Christian addressing other Christians.

Further, we can reasonably expect that any and all future wars will unleash the same or similar diabolical arsenals, with the same unspeakable horrors as consequence.

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Christian worship, I'll argue, should no longer be celebrating the violence of war, no matter how ingenuously entered into, or how courageously fought.

Rethinking Remembrance Day

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(Was it ever so, perhaps even in Augustine's day? Did he set his standards purposely high - impossibly high - knowing human frailty as he did, and our human lust for violence? Did he anticipate, therefore, that a continued, passionate pacifism would *still be maintained* among most Christians - a *contextual* pacifism - even if not a strict *ideological* pacifism? The Lutheran in me harbours this hope: a growing, passionate, contextual or situational pacifism taking root among mainline Christians, even if not an ideological pacifism.)

Finally, military forces in any future war, in my view, are to be pitied, not honoured. They will have been betrayed - deceived - by their leaders, civilian and military. Sheep without a shepherd. Sheep to the slaughter. Ask current veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan. Many veterans today - and their families - feel bitterly betrayed by their leadership.

And the rest of us too, those of us at home, the non-combatants. We too will have been betrayed, deceived into supporting these truly monstrous evils, with our taxes and with our acquiescent silence. Betrayed by our leaders, and by the unremitting rhetoric of The War Industry in our marketplaces and in our media.

And also - alas! - in our churches.

But, you ask, what can we do in the face of aggression? The Quakers, as I understand it, speak of a Third Way. (Not incidentally, this was also the operating insight of Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr.) No, do not resist evil with evil, violence with violence. And equally, do not simply capitulate to evil. There must be a Third Option. Discovering that Third Possibility is what we pay our politicians to do. They fail us if they don't.

Meantime, modern warfare accomplishes almost nothing good. War brutalizes not only the vanquished. It brutalizes the

victorious as well. Warfare defaces the *Imago Dei* - the Image of God, the Body of Christ - in those who are killed. And equally in those who do the killing. Perhaps even worse, for parents, than knowing their child may be killed in war, is the knowledge that that beloved child will be trained to kill, taught to kill: a tender human soul perhaps permanently savaged, conditioned to cut short other human lives or to leave other human lives hideously, permanently scarred.

It's worth recalling that an early Christian hero was Martin of Tours, a Roman legionnaire in the Fourth Century who according to legend gave up his military commission as the first Christian 'conscientious objector'. The Day of his commemoration, on many ecumenical calendars, including Lutheran, Anglican, and Methodist, is - Surprise! - November 11, for my purposes here, an admirable convergence of date and themes indeed! I'm willing to observe St. Martin's Day on that date. Not Remembrance Day.

Symbols and their meanings change. Warfare has changed. Human life has changed. The world has changed. I call on all disciples of the Prince of Peace, and others of good will, to refuse to participate in any future war.

And - importantly - to refuse to acquiesce in the glorification of violence that religious observance of Remembrance Day necessarily includes.

Paul Bosch is a retired pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, Emeritus Dean of the Chapel at Waterloo Lutheran Seminary in Waterloo, ON, and a member of the Executive of Liturgy Canada.

It's worth recalling that an early Christian hero was Martin of Tours, a Roman legionnaire in the Fourth Century who according to legend gave up his military commission as the first Christian 'conscientious objector'. The day of his commemoration is November 11.

What does it mean to remember by marking two minutes of silence, wearing a poppy, laying a wreath, or participating in other aspects of Remembrance Day ceremonies?

Lest We Forget

Marilyn Malton

Among my most vivid childhood memories are the times when, with my schoolmates, I stood in solemn silence remembering. When we assembled to observe Remembrance Day there was the singing of *O God, Our Help in Ages Past*, the recitation of *In Flanders Fields*, and most compellingly for me, the standing in silence. But what did I, a child born in peacetime with no experience or memory of war, remember? I remembered stories I'd been told. Stories such as how the son of the widow who lived next door to my family was killed in the dying days of WWII.

As I grew older, and continued to mark two minutes of silence on Remembrance Day, there was more to remember; stories of people throughout the world for whom conflict and war was not a memory, but a daily reality with terrible costs. And with these stories came the conviction that remembering included the imperative to work for peace.

Later still, in 2008, I stood amidst other members of my congregation on Remembrance Sunday and hoped to draw some strength from their presence. I had even more to remember now including the stories and faces of close to 100 Canadian soldiers killed in Afghanistan. Many of their faces were distressingly similar to that of my 21 year old son, a reservist, who volunteered to serve in Afghanistan. I prayed for him, as I did every day, longing for his safe return and that of his friends and comrades. A few days later I remembered again in the company of the wider community gathered at a local cenotaph, and among other yearnings, hoped that the following Remembrance Day I would not be laying a wreath in my son's memory.

What does it mean to remember by marking two minutes of silence, wearing

a poppy, laying a wreath, or participating in other aspects of Remembrance Day ceremonies? Surely there is a complex web of meanings, but Remembrance Day rituals, together with the storytelling that accompanies them, are meant to help us express and create meaning out of the myriad of experiences in our lives, particularly those associated with war and armed conflict. Is participation in the observances beneficial for Christians trying to make sense of war, and is there a place for them in the context of Christian worship?

Deciding to engage in Remembrance Day observances, or refusing to be part of them, involves an interpretation of the meaning of the rituals and the stories that undergird them. Margaret Mary Kelleher, in her article on *Liturgical Theology*, provides a helpful framework for describing and interpreting the web of meanings of Remembrance Day rituals. Kelleher distinguishes among the *public meaning* of a rite, that is, the interpretation that most of the people share who engage in or carefully observe the ritual; the *official meaning* which is concerned with the significance the originators or officials give to the rite; and the *private meaning* referring to the individual significance of the rite to some of the participants.¹

The *official* civic focus of Remembrance Day is remembering those who died in service to their country and that we must work for peace.² The quandary of Canadian Members of Parliament about how and when to honour the first anniversary of the signing of the Armistice was resolved by King George V. On 7 November 1919, the king issued a proclamation addressed to "all the peoples of the Empire", calling for a two minute Silence at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month "so that in perfect stillness the thoughts of every

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Lest We Forget

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one may be concentrated on reverent remembrance of the glorious dead". The King's wishes were observed and the impact of the Silence led to calls for it to be repeated; in subsequent years the ritual was elaborated to include bugle calls before and after the Silence, prayers and hymns, recitations, and the national anthem.³ In 1921, the same year as the poppy was introduced in Canada as a symbol for the remembrance of war dead, Armistice Day was established as an official holiday in Canada. Significantly, the legislation was amended in 1931 to change "Armistice" to "Remembrance" Day and later the commemoration expanded to include remembrance of war dead from World War II, the Korean War, other conflicts, and peacekeeping missions.⁴

The focus is remembrance, not militarism or the glorification of war, and the two minute silence was established as the central act of remembrance. Adrian Gregory, in *The Silence of Memory*, explains that the power of the Silence for participants was that it provided a *public*, united action and, at the same time, a *private* commemoration in which individuals could be alone with their thoughts. However, the observance of Armistice Day "was part of a sustained and creative effort to give meaning and purpose to the terrifying and unexpected experience of mass death"⁵ and from the first anniversary of the Armistice there were conflicting interpretations. Church and state used the language of sacrifice, of both the combatants and their bereaved families, to offer consolation; the dead had not died in vain but had furthered the cause of justice and peace. At the same time, alternative narratives and interpretations were offered by church and society; participants must remember (and not forget) that the world had not been delivered from the perils of

war, and militarism had not created peace. Ninety years later, Remembrance Day highlights the continuing struggle to find some individual and collective meaning or purpose in millions more war dead in the changing context of our world, its wars, and its weaponry.

Christian communities are not exempt from this struggle; a congregation may well include individuals whose tendencies range from bellicose to pacifist. Many individuals in our congregations have been caught up in armed conflict or war, either as combatants or civilians; all have some knowledge of war. Even our lectionary readings expose us to images and stories of war and military metaphors. Remembrance Day observances can be a resource in our worship to help us respond collectively, within a Christian framework, to our war-filled human story and struggles, but the rituals must be honest and help us evaluate our individual and cultural interpretations of the meaning of war in light of the Gospel.

One way to evaluate if our Remembrance Day observances are honest is to apply the criterion Herbert Anderson and Edward Foley insist on in *Mighty Stories, Dangerous Rituals*. They assert that to be honest our rituals and stories must balance parabolic and mythic forms of storytelling. Myths bring together and reconcile opposites, such as war and peace, and boldly create the belief that reconciliation and a better future are possible. Parables focus on contradiction, leave room for ambiguity, and face hard realities.⁶ The symbols we use such as poppies and silence, and the images we set out in the prayers, hymns, readings and sermon must balance comfort and promised stability with an admission and acknowledgement of the painful, real-life experiences of

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Our vision is costly, not cheap, grace; hope, not despair.

Lest We Forget

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people, and the need for transformation to achieve a more authentic peace and reconciliation. They need to respond to our struggle to understand when Christians can justify war, and call us to recommit ourselves, in the words of our baptismal covenant, to strive for justice and peace among all people, and to respect the dignity of every human being.

Our vision is costly, not cheap, grace; hope, not despair. We must evaluate our symbols and actions of Remembrance Day, and the stories that undergird them, in light of the gospel. We need to be intentional about what vision of the Kingdom of God we are expressing through our observances, and conscious of what they are teaching us about who we are and who Jesus Christ is, because we will be shaped and formed by our participation. But through our participation and action we must also shape and interpret our Remembrance Day observances so they honestly reflect both our human stories and the gospel.

So, yes, participating in Remembrance Day observances can be beneficial for Christians trying to make sense of war and loss, and yes, there can be a place for them in the context of Christian worship, but only if they are honest and help us to evaluate our interpretations and justifications of war in light of the gospel.

Our 21 year old son, now a war veteran, returned home safely on 2 April 2009, just in time for Holy Week. I don't yet know what I will remember this Remembrance Day.

¹ M.M. Kelleher, "Liturgical Theology: A Task and a Method." *Worship*, 1988, 62 (1), 2-25.

² Veteran Affairs Canada. *A Day of Remembrance*. Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada represented by the Minister of Veteran Affairs, 2005

³ Adrian Gregory. *The Silence of Memory: Armistice Day 1919-1946*. Oxford: Berg Publishers, 1994

⁴ www.warmuseum.ca/cwm/exhibitions.remember/armisticeday. Retrieved 30 May 2009.

⁵ *The Silence of Memory*, p. 19

⁶ Herbert Anderson and Edward Foley. *Mighty Stories, Dangerous Rituals: Weaving Together the Human and the Divine*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass., Publishers, 1998

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Website Highlight

www.sacredspace.ie

Sacred Space is a work of the Irish Province of the Society of Jesus. It originated in the offices of the Jesuit Communication Centre in Ireland in 1999 and is now available in 22 languages. Being a ministry of the Irish Jesuits, it is inspired by the spirituality of Saint Ignatius of Loyola (Ignatian spirituality).

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Is there a website you think others should know about? Email Liturgy Canada at litcan@liturgy.ca



*Poppies and
Just War*

sacralization?

*dreadfully
hurtful?*

Opening the Conversation

The comments below represent the thoughts and reactions, primarily to Pastor Bosch's initial article, from six parish clergy, serving in vastly different environments, and all expressing much of the tension and ambiguity that many feel. These comments are anonymous and identification of specific parishes or communities has been omitted. It is our hope that these comments are helpful and provocative. Let us know your thoughts.
The Editor

I am grateful that you have raised the issue; I believe it is of much greater importance than we have been letting on. If we believe that ritual practice moulds human consciousness, then the sacralization of our military exploits is not only dangerous but idolatrous.

But the practice is usually defended by an appeal to the real value of remembering; and I'm guessing that the article needs to acknowledge this, if only to puncture the illusion that this is what our practice is really about. People will say (and rightly) that we must not forget this 20th century tragedy, that we must not write off the lives of these young men whom we used to defend our own interests, that we must remember the horrors lest we fail to learn from our experience, and so on. Acknowledging the necessity of such remembering might be coupled, however, with the observation that this is not, in fact, what the ritual is really about, especially when it takes place as a Christian liturgy.

So here is my suggestion. What the celebration of Remembrance Day in Church is really about is sacralization. By ritualizing our participation in war as a church, we give it sanction as a sacred thing. And what we are sacralizing is chauvinism, xenophobia, and patriotic vengeance. We are also sacralizing our exploitation of the young, the poor, and the naive for 'cannon-fodder' by according their deaths the character of 'sacrifice' (an explicitly religious term).

And, as you observe, we are sacralizing the politics that has bowed down before the golden image of the military-industrial complex. In many of our church buildings, we have actually constructed shrines to those who have 'sacrificed' their lives before this golden image.

The fact that the ceremony (even in the form celebrated in secular arenas) evolved in the era of established religion (in the UK and the Commonwealth -- I won't attempt to analyze its evolution in the USA) confirms this interpretation, I think; even the poppy worn in public, therefore, participates in this attempt at sacralization, it seems to me.

As with all Liturgy Canada articles, I look at this through the lens of my lived parish experience - 20 years in 5 southern Ontario parishes, rural, small town and urban. While I know that some would find this particular discussion interesting, others would find it dreadfully hurtful, and this is not because they glorify war, or regard war and stuff military as sacred. In every parish I've been a part of, I have known war vets (in my case all from WWII), and I have listened to many stories. These have been - all of them - small, poignant vignettes, many humorous. Of what it was like to be part of D-Day; fighting hand-to-hand and house-to-house in Sicily; being a German prisoner of war in the Ukraine for 5 years; being left for dead beside one's tank, and reciting the Lord's Prayer over and over again. I have never heard a story glorifying war, or desiring its sacralization, then or now.

And as for the shrines constructed in our churches to honour those who have 'sacrificed' themselves before this golden image...

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Opening the Conversation

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My parish houses the flags of a local regiment. Do I like them in the church? No. Not at all. But there are more important discussions to be had than removing those flags, and to raise that issue would effectively end any other productive conversation. And we could analyze to death the reasons for this, but I don't know that this would be useful either. I'd rather have conversation about war and violence and what peace might actually look like, and leave the flags out of it.

My husband's first parish was in eastern Ontario, in a community whose population was never more than 250, plus the surrounding township. At the back of the church is a plaque - the shrine - honouring those who died in WWI. 37 young men from that parish alone died in WWI. In one case, a family lost 4 sons, ranging in age from 18 - 23. If in my parish in 2009, we were to experience the deaths of 37 teenagers and young adults over a 4 year period, I dare say that we might erect a so-called shrine, too.

I understand intellectually all the arguments and that there is an important discussion to be had. But the characterizations of the poppy and Remembrance Day observances I find to be out of proportion to what I have experienced.

I come upon this issue with a foot in both "camps" -- I am a former member of Pax Christi and yet a pastor in a parish with a few veterans from WWII.

So -- when Remembrance Day falls on or around a Sunday, we do include prayers for the peaceful resolution of all world conflict, for our members of the armed forces that they might come home safely, for the people in the countries where they serve.... etc. etc. We also have sung O Canada on occasion. When I have ever included a line or two about this day in a homily (especially when November

11 falls on a Sunday) I have always mentioned how in the early Church, Christians did not serve as soldiers, they were expected to turn their back on that career and that none of our veterans (in my parish anyway) glorify war or wish it upon us. I have never changed lectionary readings and the mention of Remembrance Day is as much an aside as Mother's Day or Father's Day are. The Day we celebrate is Sunday, the Lord's Day, and in our civic calendar we "acknowledge" Remembrance Day. Of course, other years, when November 11th falls mid-week, we have done nothing at all.

I guess we in this parish are all over the map (maybe it's more true to say that I am all over the map) which I think reveals some of the conflicted feelings we Christians have in the 21st century about this whole issue -- needing to remember the sacrifice of many young men and women (my children's ages for G's sake!) without "sanctifying" something so awful as war.

For what it's worth...

Throughout my ministry, I have strenuously eschewed anything beyond an 'Act of Remembrance' included in the liturgy of the Sunday nearest (usually the Sunday *before* -- don't quite get that either.....) Remembrance Day. I have (mostly successfully) resisted changing the lectionary from that for the day, as opposed to something for Remembrance Day; I have assiduously preached, taught, even yelled about Remembrance Day being a CIVIC observation (and an important one, I would posit) and NOT a religious observance.

Through all of this, I have also lost the battle, perhaps even the war. While I

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all over the map?

a civic observation not a religious observance?



*tricky to
navigate
pastorally and
liturgically?*

*treasured
celebration?*

Opening the Conversation

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think that the act of *remembering*, with all of the positive implications of that remembrance is very important, it seems incredibly difficult to separate it from unhelpful, militaristic, *fight* glorifying images of certain Victorian hymns (O God Our Help in Ages Past, O Valiant Hearts, Abide with Me, etc. etc. – some images of which are perfectly sound, but which have been totally subsumed by Remembrance Day) and other extra-liturgical acts such as the processing of flags, the reading of names from memorial plaques, the desire for the inclusion of stories of war, the reading of certain poetry like *In Flanders' Fields*, etc.

Why, for example, should we not incorporate the remembrance of those killed in war in the actions we do on All Souls Day? It's even close in the calendar.

But, try as I might, I seem to have been incapable of creating anything beyond even the slightest crack in this obelisk of cultural observance. As the number of living veterans of WWII decreases, the sharpness of it all is changed, but it is a difficult ditch in which to try to stake a place.

Like everyone else, I have found these waters tricky to navigate pastorally and liturgically. In seven years here I have introduced all kinds of liturgical changes and none -- and I mean none -- have elicited anything near the response I got when I proposed doing away with the singing of O Canada and the Last Post/Reveille on "Remembrance Sunday". (I did manage, shortly after I arrived, to put away the large Canadian flag that the interim priest before me had procured and which virtually obscured our bird bath baptismal font.) My proposal to do away with these things was met with stiff and strong opposition, including from my two wardens at the time. One is in

charge of the Veteran's wing at Sunnybrook and saw this as an offence to veterans. The other saw this as a moving away from a vital tradition.

The saw-off was that O Canada is gone, but the Last Post has remained (played by a real trumpeter, rather than played from a tape, as was done in the past!). The liturgy begins in silence, followed by an exhortation which I have written which describes what we are remembering and states in strong terms that we remember ALL those who have died, and those whose lives are currently upended by war. This is followed by the Last Post/Reveille and then prayers for peace. From there the liturgy continues as normal (often with the lectionary readings of the day), and with a strong focus on resurrection. (We have often concluded with "Jesus lives, thy terrors now..."). We use white as the liturgical colour. We do not wear poppies on our vestments. When I preach, I preach pacifism, making a special effort to "preach" this during the children's time...

My experience has been different than most of what I've read so far. I come from a Presbyterian background, and have only seen the (Anglican) light strongly enough to walk in it since 2001. I am presently serving a parish which is delighted to describe itself in its profile as being "the last bastion of liberalism", so that may colour my experience with Remembrance Day.

As a Presbyterian minister, I discovered in my congregations (NW Ontario, Edmonton, London ON, and Regina) that they treasured the celebration of Remembrance Day on the Sunday prior to November 11. It was not, as others have suggested, a "sacralization of our military exploits", and certainly not so by those who had participated in those exploits. Virtually all of the veterans

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Opening the Conversation

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hated the remembrance of the military exploits, but expressed a need to remember their comrades as a way of honouring not only their courage, but also the friendships that had developed in the midst of the horror. For them, the remembering was an act of "communion with my dead friends" as one veteran put it to me. It was and remains for me a profound piece of what the communion of saints is all about.

As a Presbyterian I was not formally bound by any lectionary. Throughout my ministry, I consistently chose to bind myself to its discipline, so I was always able to tell the people in my congregations that these were the texts for the day, and I chose not to change them for this particular purpose. After all, as I disingenuously mentioned to them, if we worship a God of peace, surely every text would lend itself to that purpose.

One of the ways I dealt with my own personal discomfort around the issues of war and peace and remembrance was to suggest in all congregations that if we are indeed remembering those who have died, then since the church is the worldwide body of Christ, we ought to be remembering not only soldiers from Canada and the USA and England and France, but also Italy, Germany, Japan, Vietnam, etc. The first time I suggested this, it was (as you might imagine) with great trepidation and fear. In every case, however, after some discussion, people generally saw the point of that. Their first reaction might have been negative, but after a while they began to understand that the church transcends national boundaries, and they ended up being quite pleased to honour all those whose lives had been torn apart by the horrors.

Another comment -- I have discovered that the need to celebrate Remembrance Day was very much stronger in all four Presbyterian churches I served than in

this [Anglican] parish. Now, I don't know if that insight would be more true generally or not. But one of the reflections it spawned in me was that the Presbyterians are hungry for liturgy. Anglicans have a liturgy which feeds our souls. Presbyterians suffer the same hunger (although they might never name it that way), and the Remembrance Day observance, with all its rich liturgy, fed some of that hunger. (By the way, as a Presbyterian, I was a member of the liturgical mafia who was looked on with some distrust in that denomination by everyone except those in my four congregations who got a taste for a higher liturgical expression in worship.) The trooping in of the colours ... the procession ... the silence between O Canada and Last Post/Reveille ... all met some of that hunger for liturgical expression which was not satisfied for them on a weekly basis.

That has not been true here. I have been able to treat Remembrance Day with benign neglect in our parish (except for last year when it fell on a Sunday). And even then, instead of doing too much with it in worship (we sang O Canada and had a minute of silence), what we did was re-organize our schedule (normally 9:15 and 11:00 worship) so that we only had the 9:15, and encouraged people to go from church to the cenotaph for the 11:00 observances normally organized by the Legion in our small city.

In 25 years of ministry and dealing with this stuff in Presbyterian churches, the focus of my preaching on this has not been twofold: the first (naturally) has been to preach about peace; the second so much as the body of Christ (and communion of saints) which supersedes all geographic and temporal boundaries.





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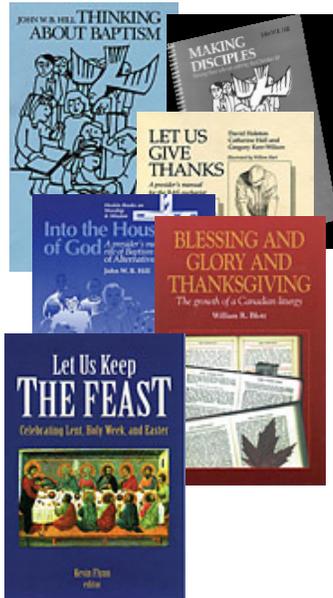
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