

RECTOR'S RAMBLINGS November 2024

Winter is coming. For those of you who did not notice it whilst it was here, British Summertime has now ended. If October is the month where the Church gives thanks for Harvest and Creation, then November is the month for remembering. The 2nd November is All Souls Day. For centuries the Church has marked this day with a simple service at the point in the year where the seasons turn, the work slows, and nights draw in. In each of our churches sheets have been put out for people to add the names of their dead. At the All Souls service those on the parish lists will be prayed for by name, along with any who have been buried in our villages in the last three years; candles will be lit, and all who wish to remember have a chance to come together in the quiet of an evening.

Then, a week later, we have our Remembrance service, where we remember those who have died in war amidst lowered flags and sobbing bugles. It is a more conspicuous, less contemplative service. One where we come together as a village to mark the cost of war and the value of what has been bought for us by those who risk their lives, before the communities they came from dedicate themselves for another year to work for peace.

Why do we take the trouble of remembering? It may seem rather trite, but I believe it is because the cost of forgetting is too high. Christianity teaches that, whilst death is not a punishment, life is a gift. Every life has an inherent value, not greater nor less than any other. Every life is a gift from God, every person made in God's image and redeemed by Christ.

We are all of us influenced by others and bound up in the stories of those around us as they are bound up in our own. We remember others because of the way they have affected us, through love, through loss, even those we have never known whose lives have none the less shaped the way we ourselves may live. At these services, named or unnamed, we pray for ALL who have died, it is a long list, longer than anyone can know. We remember and reaffirm the value of every life and the way it is lived.

I think I can say it no better than a former Dean of St. Pauls: 'No man is an island, entire of itself. Each is a piece of the continent, a part of the main. If a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less. As well as if a promontory were. As well as if a manor of thine own or of thine friends were. Each man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind. Therefore, send not to know for whom the bell tolls, it tolls for thee.'

This month, as the year eases but before winter bites, we come together in the gloaming to light a spark. To remember love, loss, the promise of God, and the people whose lives have impacted on our own. We are each called to remember in some way because we cannot forget. Remembrance goes beyond grief, or shutting away, or coping.

Remembrance acknowledges pain, reinforced the strength of love and memory, and allows us to continue in and construct the future without being lost in the past.

Whomever you remember this November, whomever has been a part of your life, and whosoever's lives you are shaping, I pray that God will be with you, carry you, guide you, and bless you as you bless others.

Revd George Frost