

# 32<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Year

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When WWI came to an end on 11/11/18 there can hardly have been a family or community unaffected by loss. On the noticeboard I have taken the liberty of sharing with you photos of my father, his brothers and cousin who all served in the 1<sup>st</sup> World War. The youngest brother Archie did not come back and they were unable to find out what happened to him. Those at home also suffered. In addition to the anxiety about those on the frontline and grief at bereavement there were physical hardships. Unlike World War II there was no rationing until 1918 so it was very hard for poor families to get the bare necessities. My mother was fortunate because living in the countryside they were able to grow their own vegetables.

So great was the impact that a national day of Remembrance was established and the Cenotaph – literally ‘empty tomb’ built as a focal point since bodies were not brought home for burial. At the time there was controversy – was this for those who had died or for the bereaved? For those in the Reformation tradition prayer for the dead was a waste of time but the experience of so many people led to a wider understanding and hope for God’s mercy. For Catholics there was no such problem. Every Mass is offered for both the living and the dead. There can be no greater act of remembrance and thanksgiving. Our celebration of Mass presupposes a number of things as central to our Christian Faith. The first is the Resurrection. If Jesus had not risen from the dead at Easter all we could do would be to remember with admiration and sorrow the sacrifice of a good man. As Christians, though, we believe that Jesus rose from the dead and after forty days ascended to heaven. He is alive now reigning in Heaven at the right hand of the Father.

Now his role is to intercede for us with his Father asking forgiveness for our sins and that we might share the gift of eternal life. This second point is the mystery of which our second reading speaks today. Christ has entered not a human sanctuary but heaven itself. He is Son of God and so his one sacrifice on the cross is of infinite value – worth the life of every human being who will ever live. He is the Lamb of God. One drop of his blood suffices to wash away the sins of the whole world. “Christ offers himself only once to take the faults of many on himself, and when he appears a second time, it will not be to deal with sin but to reward with salvation those who are waiting for him”.

Thirdly, Christ is truly present at every Mass. Through the power of the Holy Spirit Our Lord transcends time and space. Using the lips of the priest to say “This is my Body...This is my Blood” he transforms bread and wine so that they become Jesus himself present on the altar and uniting himself to us in Holy Communion. Across the centuries we are made one with the sacrifice on Calvary and the Risen Lord in Heaven. The Mass is not something separate from Calvary. It is not a simple sacrifice of praise or offering of bread and wine. What we offer through Christ the High Priest to our Father is the most precious gift in the world, the body and blood of His Son. Until the end of time we offer in a sacramental way the sacrifice of Christ offered once in time on the altar of the cross

Not everyone lives such a holy life that they have nothing to regret and this is inevitably true in time of war. The Church teaches us; “All who die in God's grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation; but after death they undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven.” At Mass we ask Jesus to purify those who have gone before us so that they may be ready to take their place at the heavenly banquet. We also ask the saints in heaven to pray for us. The bond of the Holy Spirit which we call the Communion of Saints is stronger than the power of death and will be revealed to us in all its glory when our turn comes to enter heaven.