



Proper 32, Year C – November 7, 2010 – 8 a.m.
Remembrance Sunday

A Homily preached by the Rev'd Tara Livingston

Je me souviens....I remember. What is the purpose of memory? Why has God given us the blessing and sometimes the curse of being able to recall our past? Within our church community we gather every week to remember...every week. Each week we recall Jesus' life and how his example has touched us, we recall his birth, his ministry and his death and resurrection. When we celebrate communion we say that we do this in memory of him. Why? Why do we look back into our past, our collective past, and memorialize events?

For some of us wandering down memory lane is not a pleasant experience. There are places within our recollection that are painful or sad and by remembering them we subject ourselves to re-experiencing that emotion and sometimes it is too much to take, too difficult to bare. There are some within this very community who will not be with us today because the act of recollection is still too painful. Conversely some of our happiest moments from our past also reside in that part of our brain that files away life experience and we smile and the recollection makes us re-experience the intense positive feelings that we associate with it. But why? Why is it in our human nature to remember?

On November 11th every year we are asked to remember something that we as individuals actually have no memory of. I doubt that anyone here has a direct connection to the Armistice that was signed some 90 years ago in 1918. We have heard the stories, though. We may have sat at the kitchen table with a loved one who served or heard stories of ones who sacrificed everything....everything to bring peace to a world that they loved. For us in the younger generations certainly the First World War and even the Second World War are out of our realm of individual experience but they have become a large part of our collective memory. But we continue to have connections to people who are willing to make the ultimate sacrifice in parts of the world that we only know in pictures. To me they are real, they are individuals that I have met and have relationships with. My question is, have we learned anything from remembering those who went before them?

I have two brothers who served in the Canadian military and both of them say that they would proudly serve again if asked. My brother Drew served in the First Gulf War. I was mostly terrified while he was there but also intensely proud. I do not pretend to understand war – fighting for peace is like having sex for virginity – but I do understand that those who serve believe they are fighting for a good cause. Our soldiers in Afghanistan are willing to give their very lives to bring even the possibility of peace to a region that is in such desperate need of it. While I remember my brothers' stories, while I honour our soldiers who put themselves on the front line, I do believe that if we do not learn from our memories – both our individual experience memories and our collective memories – we have done a disservice to God's gift of recollection.

Je me souviens.

We will gather today around God's table to remember the sacrifice that Jesus made for us. We are called to recollect God's love for us but it doesn't end there. When we eat the bread and drink the wine we are commanded to take that love that God has for us and share it with the world. We are commanded to continue to learn from our past so that we might shape a different future. It is simply not enough to recall – we must learn and then live the best lives we can.

So as you wander through your memories, the experiences in your past that have made you who you are; honour them and let them guide you. As we as a collective conscience remember the soldiers that have died...those who died in the trenches and were honoured and those who died without anyone knowing their name, those who died leading their troops into battle and those who followed, those who stayed at home and mourned the loss and those who valiantly carried on with their lives....let not their sacrifice go un-named or the lessons go unlearned. We need to let the memory of those experiences guide our way as a community. Those voice cry out to us from where their bodies lay "we are the dead..Short days ago we *lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow, Loved, and were loved, and now we lie In Flanders fields.*

We remember. We remember.
Amen.