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Anzac Day - 25 April 2023

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Erratum

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25 April 2023

Anzac Day

Reflection by Gerard Moore

Introduction

Writing a reflection for an ANZAC Day Mass is not so straightforward. The readings offer open interpretations that we will look into below. The ongoing relationship between the armed forces and the church chaplaincy works at another layer. Priests have been with soldiers in the most difficult of circumstances, along with Salvation Army officers and chaplains of other denominations, together in situations of death, courage, despair, fear, pain and hope. The same ministries have been pastorally caring for lonely families, grieving parents and partners, and all those military personnel and their loved ones going about their lives on bases across Australia and the world.

There is much in this environment that is unspoken and much that is buried. Violence, death and injury are not easily forgotten, and all these experiences leave wounds. The layer of scarring from the first and second world wars, Korea, and Vietnam remain within generations and their lives. New scarring from Afghanistan, the turning back of boats, and dangerous peace keeping roles worms through our social fabric. As always there are achievements to be proud of, healing to take place and the ongoing struggle back into a life of normalcy.

The Australian Catholic Church has had an uneasy relationship with the ANZAC origins and its legacy. The Church was a fierce opponent of conscription for World War I but supported it for the battle against Japan in World War II. The Church has refrained from embracing war as something approved by God or part of the Christian code of faith, though this was strained with the anti-communist motivation behind the war in Vietnam. More consistently its efforts have been to minister to all involved while working for peace.

This ministry is ever widening. Perhaps most vital here is the acknowledgement of the plight of indigenous diggers who returned from the battlefield to the same systemic racism and prejudice that marked their lives before enlistment. Only a generation or two earlier their relatives were fighters and victims in the frontier wars, events which we remain too slow to acknowledge.

There is further care to be taken with the memory of ANZAC. The experience of war did not make Christian men and women necessarily more Christian, nor did proximity to death lead many to turn to Christ. Greater importance was placed on the 'sacrament of the shared cigarette', though Christian ritual was also appreciated. We are also dealing with history that concentrated mainly on the efforts of men. Only in

recent years have the war efforts and sacrifices of women been taken into account, far less the violence inflicted on wives once the soldiers had returned.

We have a mixed legacy, and perhaps this is one of the great blessings of ANZAC. It is a remembering not built upon the glorification of violence, might or empire. It provides a space for the telling of truth, the unveiling if only for a moment of hidden things, the revelation of some painful realities in our society, and the celebration of courage, selflessness and endurance. Our role here is to allow Christ to be present.

Below is a short commentary on each reading rather than a fuller interpretation for the Mass. The intention is to allow you to craft a homily that meets the context of the people gathered as they in turn gather their memories.

Penitential Act

Use one of the *Roman Missal* texts or this optional litany form:

Lord Jesus, you are the true source of peace. Lord have mercy.

Through your death you bore much fruit. Christ have mercy.

You are our salvation. Lord have mercy.

First Reading

Wisdom 3:1-9

This is a text of great comfort when applied to all who have lost their lives in war. It does not make sense of death, but rather offers relief for those who remain in grief and sadness. There is peace in death, away from the ravages of fighting and destruction. Beyond death there is immortality in God, and an awaiting for loved ones now mourning them. At heart, the fallen are now in the hands of God.

OR

Isaiah 9:1-6 3:1-9

Our passage from the prophet Isaiah is a paen extolling peace. In hope in God, darkness gives way to peace. While the poem is set around the coming of a leader who brings peace, we as a Christian community in our age are challenged to be peacemakers and wise counsellors of peace who put behind us the clothes and weapons of war and create a different future.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 114(116):5-6 or 115(116):10-11, 15-16

I will walk in the presence of the Lord. Or alleluia

The psalmist presents the voices of those who have suffered with the sure conviction that God does indeed hear them, always.

Second Reading

Ephesians 2: 13-18

In his violent and bloody death Jesus overcame violence and horror. His death is a call to peace and the beginning of a new humanity. The resurrection victory over the Cross enables us as Christians to lead in actions of reconciliation and peacemaking. We who live in the love of the Trinity, with our place in the Spirit and the Father through Christ, are called to 'bring near' those who are in enmity.

OR

1 Corinthians 1:18-25

I must admit that I do not know what this reading brings to the ANZAC tradition! It can be twisted to a militaristic reading of the Good News as embracing the folly of war as a Christian virtue. More positively, it offers that the Gospel does not comply with the 'wisdom of the age' where that calls for war. I will leave you as reader and preacher to lead me in this selection.

Gospel Reading

John 12:23-28

The reading has some evocative images. It calls to mind service and, indeed, service to death. There is a sense of realism in the image of falling to the ground, and in the Australian traditions of loyal unstinting service. The backdrop is that this service has saved the nation from invasion and tyranny and has been for a profound purpose that affects all present.

OR

John 14:23-29

This passage sets the sacrifice of war, and of peacekeeping, within the context of love. Service and love are bound together. It carries an image of going away, with many never to return. With this is the price of peace, a peace gained through such loss. However, the bounty of God's love enables those who remain to hold that the dead are in God's loving care.

Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction

Let us bring our needs to God, our strength, who makes haste to help us.

Petitions

We pray for the leaders of our Church, clergy, lay and religious, that they witness to the gospel in such a way that their service echoes the non-violent stance of Jesus in times of conflict.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for leaders of nations who are at war and those who support them. May the end result always be peace and justice.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the safety of people living in areas where there is conflict. May your angels surround them and your Spirit guard them.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for service men and women who protect the rights of all God's creatures. May their thoughts and actions always be directed towards justice and peace.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those who give their lives to the healing vocation, may they be strengthened by the Holy Spirit in order to bring restoration to our wounded world.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those who have died because of war and especially those whom we loved that God will one day unite us again in joy.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the community gathered here. May the witness to the truth of justice and peace be continually present in our lives.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Conclusion

Father, you come to the help of your servants in their need, hear the prayers we make in faith, through the power of the Spirit and in the name of Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Music selections by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

Anzac Day (25 April 2023)

Title	AOV1	AOV2	CWB	CWBII	GA
A blessing hymn for Australia				655	
Advance Australia fair				656	
For Australia				545	
For the healing of the nations					513
God of peace		138		546	553
Help of Christians, guard this land			711	429	
Make me a channel of your peace		126	793	555	490
Nearer my God to thee		154			
No greater love				622	460
O God, our help in ages past	175		767	568	459
Peace I leave with you my friends			785		517
Peace with the Father				591	

Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy

Psalm 71: *Justice shall flourish in his time, and fullness of peace for ever.*

	CWB	JOBA	JOBF
Psalm 71	175	pg. 10	pg. 44

Psalm 114/115: *I will walk in the presence of the Lord in the land of the living.*

	CWB	JOBF
Psalm 114/115	152a	pg. 42

Music selections by Michael Mangan

(Further general selections are at the back of this issue)

No greater love (SYJ) [Gathering, Recessional]

One body in Christ (Esp. V1) (TWB) [Communion]

Peace for all time (TCS) [Communion, Recessional]