

Trinity 23 Remembrance Sunday 2010 St Bride

The entire meaning of remembrance is only valid if we believe in the promise of eternal salvation: otherwise, it becomes a simple celebration of what a human being has accomplished here in his time on earth, and in a sense, to say farewell. Because, you see, all is ended, and those left behind must simply move forward as they work toward their end, their passing, their death.

For those who believe in re-incarnation, the end is but a beginning, in many cases the new beginning being predicated by the quality of the life that has ended, the concept of the judgment seat in this instance being that judgment that will determine what form of life shall be the lot of the newly dead person: are they to be made into an insect or a bird, an elephant or a crocodile, a teacher or a philosopher: the range is infinite.

What determines these beliefs is the corruption of the natural theology with which God has endowed us all: as human beings, we all have a predilection for the fact that there has been Creator, a Source of all that is in the universe: that prime mover is what we call God, and it is to that Prime Mover that we look for our salvation: as we know that His Son, Jesus Christ died for us on the Cross: so we have the promise, we have the complete assurance of His Love and Caritas for all of us, who confess Him as Son of God: and who are thereby strengthened in our struggles with darkness and danger, toil and trouble in the life we lead here on earth.

So it is that we can remember with an assurance, a certainty that those who have died in the protection of the Christian life, in a struggle against the forces of darkness, forces which have caused the disputes the skirmishes, the insurrections, or as is now said, the insurgencies, between groups of men.

But, what of the terror and fear that they had to endure? What of the hunger and cold, the rain leaking into your tent, the cold eating away at your toes, at your fingers, as you lay in darkness waiting for the command to advance? What of the horrible quiet as the bomb falls, just as it is about to land: but where: in my house, in my home, or is it a neighbour, a friend who will suffer from the assault of evil, the vain attempt to derail our faith, to make us deviate from the Way the Truth and the Life (John 14.6)?

In the third chapter of Mark, 'And he saith unto them, 'Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath days, or to do evil? To save life or to kill?' But they held their peace. And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other.' (Mark 3.4-5)

When the free world was threatened by a power, and in these days, when the free world is threatened by a power driven by forces of evil intent, which had as its intention the suppression of that very freedom enjoyed by so many, there was a moral responsibility, just the same moral responsibility that drove Judas Maccabeus to lead his people in the defence of their faith against evil oppression, even to death, a responsibility that was taken up by so many offering their lives that, as St. Paul writes to the Ephesians, 'Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.' (Eph. 4.31-32).

They, in the struggle against evil and the power of darkness, might be 'kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another' even to those that they did not know, had never met, who were from different backgrounds, different countries even, but who rallied to the protection of their faith, of their way of life, so that we now may enjoy the freedom that they have so valiantly earned for us.

And we remember them in the full and certain knowledge that they have earned for themselves the supreme reward for their supreme sacrifice: they died for you, they died for me, they died that we may live in this place at this time: they died that we might make of the world a better place, a place where the true Christian values might be treasured and valued beyond price. It is our duty to work toward the fulfilment of the price of their sacrifice, and to continue in their pattern of the defence of the faith and the protection of the freedom of man: and then perhaps then only, twill their sacrifice be redeemed by those of us who are left to benefit from their gift.

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.'