



PASTORAL LETTER FOR REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY
8TH NOVEMBER 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Today is Remembrance Sunday, a day when local communities throughout the land would have normally gathered in large numbers to remember all those who died in the two world wars, and in wars and conflicts since. Because of the restrictions under which all of us are living currently, these commemorations will have to take place in a more private yet still reflective and respectful way. As Catholic Christians, an integral part of our remembrance is to pray for the repose of the souls of those who have died.

In the Second reading from the First Letter to the Thessalonians we heard St Paul address the Christians of his day: *"We want you to be quite certain, brothers, about those who have died, to make sure that you do not grieve about them, like the other people who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again, and that it will be the same for those who have died in Jesus: God will bring them with him ... With such thoughts as these you should comfort one another."* This is the faith and hope that underlies our prayers for the dead and the love which is the motivation for our remembrance of them.

It is important that we remember in our prayers too, all those in our society today who lived during the second world war, many of whom would have been at that time children or young people; and who now, in the elderly years of their lives, are yet again experiencing further fear and trauma as a result of the current pandemic. A great number of these men and women will now be isolated in their homes or care homes by the lockdown and unable to gain comfort from the presence of their friends and families. Let us keep them especially then, firmly in our hearts and prayers during Mass on this day.

As you know, for the next four weeks, we are required to restrict our movements and our gathering as parish communities and our ability to celebrate Mass together is affected again. Until this weekend we had, since July, been able to assemble in safe numbers to celebrate the sacraments. This was made possible only thanks to the incredible generosity and dedication of so many of you in our parishes who have taken on the responsibility, as stewards, for the cleansing and supervising of the safe opening of our churches. I wish to express my immense appreciation to all of you today. Like the lamps filled by the precious oil which symbolises the fuel of faith and kept burning brightly by the wise bridesmaids in today's Gospel parable, you too really are living 'lamps' burning brightly in our parishes.

Other living 'lamps' of faith, too, are: the parishes and religious communities who are providing a variety of vital charitable activities which support some of the most vulnerable people; the young people in our diocese who are helping with the distribution of newsletters and information to the homes of sick, elderly and housebound parishioners; the staff in our Catholic schools who are sustaining the education of our children; the healthcare workers and chaplains in our hospitals, care homes and communities; and, our

clergy and religious who have adapted their ministries to reach out to the spiritual and pastoral needs of the faithful and those who are struggling to cope. All of you, are giving light in times and places when it is needed most.

Rightly, this is a day on which we remember each year all those who in death made the ultimate sacrifice of their lives during conflict and war in the hope that others might live in freedom and peace. But it is right too that in November, we remember in prayer all those who have died over the last year and remember with gratitude all who today are living their lives in the service of others.

Central to the celebration of every Mass is the command of the Lord to, '*Do this in remembrance of me*'. It is in that one unique act of remembrance, which for a Christian, gives remembering the life of every human person, living or dead, its true meaning and significance. It is the remembrance of the cross of Christ and the sacrifice of His Body and Blood which shows us the path from death to life in this world, and it is through our prayerful participation in that sacrifice that the door of our tomb will be opened and we will be raised up to eternal life with Him in the world to come.

And so, in remembrance for the faithful departed we pray:

Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. May they rest in peace. Amen.

**✠ Marcus
Bishop of Leeds**

Given at Leeds on the 6th November 2020, to be read at live-streamed and broadcast celebrations of Mass, published through parish electronic distribution systems and websites, and made available to be taken away from the churches and chapels of the Diocese which open for private prayer on the weekend of 7th and 8th November 2020.