

Blessed are . . . (3)

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Ever-living God,
we remember those whom you have gathered from the storms of war
into the peace of your presence;
may that same peace calm our fears,
bring justice to all peoples
and establish harmony among the nations,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Today, Remembrance Sunday, I have two texts, both from chapter five of the gospel according to St Matthew:

'Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted'. (v4)

'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God'. (v9)

For the past couple of weeks, I have been looking at what it means to be a saint, the virtues the qualities of those who try to follow a life lived according to Christian principles as laid out in the Beatitudes with which Matthew opens his account of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. On Remembrance Sunday, when we consider the sacrifice of those who have lost their lives in the service of the homeland, it seems right and proper to explore two virtues of sainthood embodied in my texts:

'Blessed are those who mourn' 'Blessed are the peacemakers'

‘Blessed are those who mourn’ Mourning is the natural process of grief whereby and through which we express our sadness and pain at the loss of those we love and come to terms with the fact of the absence of their physical presence in our lives. There is no time limit to our mourning though it is accepted that in time such wounds can heal and that our grief diminishes as we move on with the business of living. Good grief is to confront the pain and distress we rightly feel at the time, to give it proper expression and to receive due comfort and love from those who cherish us. By expressing our sense of loss at the time of ending, we are showing respect for those we love, recognising the strength of our emotions and enabling us to continue with our lives for however long we may have left. To mourn is to remember, to hold the departed in our minds, to demonstrate that they matter to us. On anniversaries such as Remembrance Sunday, it is part of a well ordered society that we can feel and show individual and collective sorrow and respect for those who have lost their life in war.

‘Blessed are those who mourn’. To mourn is a sign we are alive. Mourning means we can feel. Through such experience we grow up, become adults, aware of pain and suffering of which in part we may be responsible. Though mourning in itself is not good, the tears we shed, the way we cope with grief, our attitude to it, can make us better people.

‘Blessed are the peacemakers’. War may be a necessary evil but peace is surely what we all ultimately desire. Peace allows the world to function and to grow and permits people to develop and to flourish. Peacemakers are those who are actively engaged in creating the harmony which allows us the space to live a good

life. A peacemaker builds bridges between people and communities, reconciles differences and disputes, fosters co-operation and respect. The paradox of having a well trained, well equipped army, navy and air force is that our armed forces can maintain the peace through the potential for war. It is ironic that in order to make true peace, it may first be necessary to fight a war !

'Blessed are the peacemakers'. To be a peacemaker is to be positive and active, creating a climate which encourages human flourishing. We can seek peace within ourselves: by knowing who we are and accepting what we are meant to do, being at ease in our vocation. We can seek peace among those we live: by building right relationships which allows the communities where we belong to flourish. Such is the holy task to which we as saints are called.

So on this Remembrance Sunday, it is right to mourn those who have died that we might live and enjoy a homeland at peace. To work for peace and to mourn are two virtues of the true saint.

I have spoken in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,
Amen.

*Preached at the Eucharist
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H: Sermon 24: Blessed R 2

