

Michael,

When I was R.C. Chaplain in the Penitentiary in Agassiz, B.C., as a member of the Ministerial Association, it was my turn to lead the Remembrance Day service in the community for the Legion and Veterans. It is undated.

Marguerite

*“I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers”.*

Today we have gathered to remember, and to remember in gratitude. Our reading suggests that we remember prayerfully as well.

Memories by their very nature give rise to feelings and to stories. Each of us here has our own memories, our own feelings, our own stories. The task is to remember reflectively, respectfully, prayerfully.

Today I choose to share with you some memories that have surfaced for me in preparation for this moment, to invite you to allow your memories to surface, and then to invite you to gather these together into a bigger Plan and bigger Story – and the Mystery of this – in prayerful gratitude.

Most of my memories come from my home, my childhood and adolescence.

I was present as a Girl Guide when King George VI and the Queen Mother unveiled the War Memorial in Confederation Square in Ottawa – the soldiers and their horses going through the Arch of Triumph. Many times since then I have witness the laying of the wreaths and the tribute to the war mothers, many of whom lost multiple sons.

I have seen the embossed book of the War Dead in the Peace Tower in the Ottawa Parliament buildings.

I remember the last time our whole family – parents, five brothers and four sisters – celebrated Christmas together – the Christmas after the Second World War started.

I remember three of my brothers leaving for overseas.

I remember the telephone call I received telling me that my oldest brother, Daniel, was dead. And the messages that came ... killed in action in North Africa; buried in the Allied cemetery in El Alamein. And day Daniel's personal effects arrived – the metal shaver given to him by my dad, mangled from the plane crash. I remember my mother's tears and pain!

I remember the rear gunner who came to visit my parents – a nervous wreck from his injuries – but the only one of the crew to survive. Recently I re-read his last letter. And I remember phrases from his previous letter – the one where he piloted his crippled plane back to the base with the comment, “It was good to know you were not a coward.” I think of the long, lonely years of his widow.

And I remember the day Gerald's letter arrived with the news that he had been injured on active duty ... and the pain he endured for the rest of his life with a steel plate in his arm and in his leg. Edward was trained and ready to go overseas when the war ended.

I used to go to Daniel's high school to see his picture and my eye would look for his name on the plaque at church. Those mementos have been moved to a secondary place; they're harder to find when I go now.

My brother Daniel would think aloud sometimes before he went overseas. He wondered if those who gave their lives would be remembered; and if those who returned alive would be respected and welcomed; and if those who returned scarred or wounded would be really cared for.

One of my most poignant memories is of Mrs. MacDonald. Mrs. MacDonald served as a nurse in World War I. She fell in love with and married a wounded soldier from that war. They lived down the street from us; had three children. Their eldest son, Mac, was killed in action in World War II.

Recently my sister told me that Mrs. MacDonald died a bitter woman. I would so wish that she could know what a deep impact her life of service had on

me, especially as I watched her wheel her husband on to their long verandah and as she cared for him and their children day after day. The wonder of her fidelity moves me to this day. And yet, I often wonder if there might not have been more that we, her neighbours, might have done to give her relief and to spend quality time with him.

I think too of the other broken ones, like Mr. MacDonald, who had the courage to live out their lives on their return to Canada. As high school students we entertained at the dances for the men who returned wounded at the War Veterans' Hospital. I realize now how totally unequipped I was to really listen to their deep pain – emotional and physical. And perhaps how unequipped they were to speak about it.

I remember the Victory Dances in the streets.

But perhaps what I treasure most is quality of faith which I witnessed, particularly in my parents. There was no doubt in my mind that they knew deeply that there was a bigger Plan, a bigger Picture – the mystery of LIFE and DEATH – and a God who is Master of LIFE and DEATH!

Memory is the ability to draw upon the best of one's life and one's traditions. Memory says: "Look what wonderful things you have already done: this proves that you can do still more wonderful things, so don't give up!

The Bible revives memories and hopes. It brings new life to our best self, planted in us by God, inherited from our ancestors.

The letter of Paul to the Ephesians, read today, is thought to be written at the end of his career. After all the earthly Journeys and human efforts, Paul or his disciple had to admit that there is a mysterious hand of God, controlling everything and leading to a goal beyond comprehension and direction.

Remembrance Day combines past, present and future; suffering and glory, hopes and fulfilment. In all of these memories never let us forget God's gracious

and merciful love. God remembers his covenant forever. God is true to himself and to his ancient promises. God's bond of love extends through the universe. God's kingdom is a kingdom for all ages: God's dominion endures through all generations.

Our greatest gift to future generations will be this remembrance of God's total goodness at the base of our existence .... When God's deeply planted life in us makes all these claims come true, the family of God's children will be complete.

To conclude, let us gather all our memories, all the names and events precious to us – and remember together in the spirit of prayer .....

*God of the nations, look upon the lands devastated by war and show us the way to peace. Turn our guns into plows and our bombs into bread. Remove hatred from our hearts and vengeance from our memories. Give us the wisdom and the will to end terrorism and war whether in lands far or near, or in the confines of our families and communities. Help us to remember that we are one world and one family. Grant this through the intercession of all the peacemakers of all times and all places, especially those who suffered persecution and death for the sake of justice and peace. Amen*

Response: **We remember gratefully and in prayer**

For those who have given the supreme sacrifice of their lives ...

For those who returned scarred and wounded ...

For those whose lives have been touched by war, especially spouses and mothers .

For the opportunity to make our homes and our communities safe, gentle places ...

For the opportunity to be transformed and to transform our world ...