

Homily 32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time (12.11.17)

A Catholic take on Remembrance Sunday

Remembrance Sunday, I wonder what it calls to mind for you, remembering. I'm always sort of puzzled when people are asked to stand still for a minute's silence, and I wonder, do they pray? Maybe the silence is a prayer. And what are they doing? Is the silence in itself honouring anything? Is it in fact in awe? Because there's something horrendous, isn't there, in war. And silence is often appropriate rather than commenting on the terrors that took place - that we stand silent before such an ugly thing that has taken place.

But I think we, as Christians, we shouldn't lose sight of this word, remembrance. It's very weak in English,

"to remember".

If we translate the original Greek anamnésis, we would get,

"call to mind".

And call to mind is more powerful, it creates an image more than just remembering. And we use this word, don't we, remembering, very weakly in our normal conversation.

"Oh, I remember you when you were at school with me." A vague passing thought, or even the tombstone "in remembrance of". It's not calling to mind. And calling to mind is a powerful image, this sense of anamnésis. Anamnésis, by the way, is the word we get amnesia from in English, loss of memory. But in the Greek it meant to call to mind, it meant memory itself. And it's the thing, when we say that we are made in the image and likeness of God, it's one of those things that we reflect or are reflected in us of God. Because God, when He calls something to mind, it springs into being. And that's why in the Eucharist, the Mass we celebrate, we have the anamnésis, after the consecration. We call to mind the Son's death and resurrection, His ascension into heaven. In other

words, we link with God in calling to mind, and bringing to life as it were, the mystery before us.

So we're not just doing it in memory of Him, but we're calling to mind with God that mystery of Christ's death, resurrection and ascension, His very life will be made present - displayed to us in the elements of bread and wine that are transformed in the consecration. And we go on, of course, remember all those living, remember all those who have died. And again our English word is a bit weak, we're saying to God,

"Call to mind, put them in your presence, make them have life."

So when we call to mind the dead in every Eucharistic prayer, we're asking God to fulfil His promise and bring them into the fullness of His presence, to share that hope that St. Paul mentioned in the Thessalonians, that they will be there to greet us, that they will be redeemed.