

TRANSCRIPT OF A HOMILY PREACHED BY FR. JOHN GAYFORD AT ST.
MARY'S, EAST GRINSTEAD ON REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY 2008.

War is always evil.

It reveals humanity at its worst.

It is hard to believe that God loved so much this humanity, that he was prepared to give himself in the form of Our Lord Jesus Christ who would suffer and die for us on the cross.

Metaphorically war opens the wounds of the cross over again, and God the creator of mankind suffers with all who suffer as a result of war.

We are not here today to argue the ethics of war. We come here in sorrow, in black, to ask God's forgiveness, and to pray for all who died or suffered as a result of war.

When we look at names on a war memorial we may be shocked by the length of the list and by the fact that so many family names appear in repetition, but unless our own family name appears we do not feel the suffering. Each name represents a person who was sacrificed in a cause that he or she was not really able to evaluate.

We have the luxury of sitting in front of a T.V. and making our own judgement informed by film evidence and commentary with a retrospective view of history. Our minds may be filled with the atrocities of war or the bravery of individual people.

Each name on a war memorial and the names of countless thousands of men and women who have no memorial represents a life snuffed out in a great variety of circumstances: most with extreme fear and suffering which those who have not been involved in such a situation cannot imagine. The scars of these deaths caused terrible suffering to families and friends. The aftermath of disease, psychological problems and famine made survival with wounds less possible and caused countless deaths.

For all these we now mourn. Individually we are powerless to put them right. We can only offer them to Almighty God, ask his forgiveness and entrust the suffering and the souls of the victims to his eternal mercy and love.

May they rest in peace, may the wounds be healed and may humanity learn by this experience.