

View from the Rectory window November 25

November 25! nearly the end of another year. Sitting down in front of a blank screen during October and thinking of November, my mind always starts with Remembrance Sunday. I feel it sets the tone for the beginning of November, and then following Remembrance Sunday, it is only a matter of time before the rest of November becomes overshadowed by the advent /coming of the season of Advent and the approach of Christmas.

So, what is the theological, spiritual and seasonal link between Remembrance and Advent? The link is in the word **Hope**, because remembering transcends time and likewise hope springs eternal. Those whose lives we remember on Remembrance Day are honoured, cherished and commemorated precisely because they have transcended their individual context and become a part of the eternal values and ethos of self-sacrifice, service and love which is the heart of the Christian ethic. Like the life of Jesus, their willingness to 'lay down their lives for their neighbour' elevates them to the transcendent realm of those who inspire us, illuminate the path for us and show us the meaning of a truly loving life. It is this work of showing us that ordinary people can make the ultimate sacrifice, that provides the mechanism and means of giving us hope. A hope that in the Christian sense is completely divinely fulfilled in the coming of Jesus Christ but is also echoed in the human lives of those we remember each year in November.

For me, this was perfectly demonstrated when we visited the Pantheon in Paris in September. A building that began as a church but is now the spiritual heart and soul of the French Republic. A building where those who the nation believes have contributed to and formed the character of the Republic have been laid to rest. A mausoleum dedicated to the lives of those who have given their lives to the values and spirit of equality, liberty, and justice.

I believe all three of those values are shared by the Christian vision of hope, love, and faith. A vision of remembering that all those who have been before us and all those who will follow us are held in eternal love and thanksgiving. A love and thanksgiving that is embodied in the nativity scene at Christmas and the celebration of a Christening in our local churches. When I celebrate a Christening with a family, I always stress that the event above all else is a celebration of the gift of life: the gift of their child to their family. Therefore, just as we celebrate each new life at a Christening, remember the fallen-on Remembrance Day, or begin in November to prepare for the gift of Jesus Christ at Christmas. Hope is the common thread. The hopes and dreams of new parents, the hope and faith of the fallen, and ultimately the confirmation in the incarnation of Christ that their sacrifice was not in vain.

Rev. Richard Higgins