

Reflection for Remembrance Sunday

As we celebrate Remembrance Sunday, we pray for all those who died during the World Wars. We remember all those who laid down their lives to enable us to be safe and free.

We remember all those service men and women and their families who have been forever changed by the effects of war.

It reminds us that we cannot repeat the mistakes of the past of those World Wars

It teaches us to use peaceful ways to solve our problems so that peace, justice, and love may prevail in our world

The month of November, we remember to pray for departed loved ones, relatives, friends, as well as all the faithful departed who have gone before us in the Lord.

He dropped his luggage on the floor, and he started to run.

This happened few years ago. I had flown to a country to attend a meeting. It was late, and everyone in the airport looked tired as we waited for our luggage.

When my bag finally arrived, I turned around. Then I saw it. A man in a military uniform dropped his luggage onto the ground and he started running. I worried that something was wrong.

As it unfolded, it was one of those moments in life when it felt like time was standing still. Everything seemed to be happening all at once. Time stood still.

I saw the military man running. Then I saw a woman, running toward him. Next to her were two little girls, each holding a sign which read "Welcome home Daddy."

This was a soldier coming home from deployment.

He ran toward his wife. She ran towards him.

And even though all of this was happening in an instant, there is one thing about that homecoming that I will never forget. I will never forget the looks on their faces. They all had the same expression.

It was the look of absolute bliss, of unfiltered joy. It was the look of a love which had been distanced by danger and duty, now reunited. It was relationships restored. It was passion and powerful patience.

It was heaven, beaming on their faces.

And the beaming, blissful looks did not disappear, even as the tears began to roll down their cheeks.

In that moment, as time stood still, I was privileged to witness this homecoming. I wished that I could take a photo and capture the look on their faces.

In the few weeks before my grandmother died, she and I talked about what would happen after she died. She believed in Jesus, risen and eternal. She believed that she would see him face to face.

She mentioned that one of her granddaughters asked her, "What will heaven be like?" And my grandmother's answer was something like this. She said:

+I believe heaven will be like the happiness you feel when you come home after a long trip.

+I believe that heaven will be like seeing your mom or dad after you've been away for a while.

+I believe that heaven will be like the look on a mother's face when she sees her child for the first time.

+I believe that heaven will be like seeing your best friend after a long time apart.

+Heaven will be like the happiness on your face when you think no one is watching. And, in heaven, the happiness never ends."

My tears, our tears, come from the reality of human grief. The Gospels tell us that Mary and the faithful women who went to the tomb had tears in their eyes. Why? Because they loved Jesus. And as a bishop once said at my grandmother's funeral – "grief is love left over."

Tears are real. And so is joy. We have painful moments of letting go, and we have blissful moments of reunion. And much of our life is lived in between those two kinds of experiences.

But our Scriptures remind us, again, what my grandmother said about heaven is, in so many ways, absolutely correct. "Heaven is the joy of coming home, and the happiness never ends."

The death of each of us is like my airport experience I described earlier. Whatever baggage we still drag around, whatever burden we still carry, gets thrown to the ground. Whatever was broken in us is made whole.

And then... we see Him, whom our heart loves. The One who loves and yearns for us. Christ already sees us, and is already running toward us. And we can drop our burdens and run towards him.

The look on God's face will be reflected on your face. Absolute bliss. Unfiltered joy. Love reunited. The joy of coming home.

What is the best homecoming you've ever had? What is the best moment of joy can you recall when you finally saw the faces of those whom you loved and had missed for a while? Again, thank God for those moments of reunion – they contain a glimpse of heaven.

This is the homecoming for which we pray as we prayerfully remember those who have already gone home before us in the Lord.

Let us continue to remember and pray for our departed loved ones and all the faithful departed.

Our hope is that one day we will be united with them and rejoice forever in God's presence.

May Christ's promise of resurrection be fulfilled in their lives.

Eternal rest grant unto them O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them.

May they rest in peace. Amen

May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen

Fr Patrick