

## **Address given by Rev'd Barbara Dineen at St Paul's Cathedral for Armistice Day 2018**

Last Sunday was All Souls' Day. A day to remember our loved ones who have died. And by coincidence, it was also the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Liberation of Le Quesnoy, a fortified town in the Somme liberated by NZ troops in one of the last acts of the war – where 140 New Zealanders lost their lives. It is noteworthy that the first man up the ladder was Leslie Averill, son of the Bishop of Auckland, who later became a highly respected and innovative doctor in Christchurch, and that he was followed by Harold Barroclough, later our Chief Justice. In her address to the hundreds of New Zealanders and French assembled there last Sunday, our ambassador to France, Jane Coombes, used this quotation:

Titiro whakamuri. Kokiri whakamua: Look to your past to inform your future.

Today is Armistice Day. A day to remember. A time for attempting to place what has now ceased to be recent history into its place in history, and to pray that the lessons of that past may be learned from and lived by.

Over the past four years, we in New Zealand have been on a journey. We have, together, traced the history of World War 1 through the significant events that marked each year. We remembered Gallipoli, and Simpson's donkey.

We marvelled at the strength of our boys who tunnelled under the city of Arras, and created a little NZ there, to prepare for the push to the

Western Front. We struggled through the mud of the Somme, where our New Zealanders so distinguished themselves at such cost. We competed for the Dave Gallaher Trophy with the Forces' Rugby team, and saw how the teamwork, esprit de corps and physical fitness contributed to the make-up of the Kiwi soldier. And now, as we remember events of 1918, we are aware that the end is in sight, even though the troops didn't know this. So I asked myself: how do we commemorate an Armistice that hasn't yet happened, 100 years ago?

The truth is that the First World War had a greater impact on NZ than any other war in the country's history. The war affected every person in NZ, and a century later, we still feel the reverberations. It would seem that 100,000 New Zealanders suffered an intimate loss – mothers, fathers, siblings, spouses or fiancées, children and friends. And the demands of those who cared for the survivors often put immense strain on families.

But in the midst of the sorrow and grief was something else – pride. The soldiers were proud of their part in the allied victory, and the fact that both friends and foes rated them amongst the best troops in the British army. And the rest of NZ was proud of them.

ANZAC Day grew out of this pride. It was first observed on 25 April 1916, when war was still raging. The government called a half-holiday to acknowledge and remember the 'noble deeds' of 'our brave NZ soldiers' at Gallipoli, 12 months earlier.

Subsequently, the rest of the British Empire, as it was then, used Armistice Day to commemorate the dead of WWI, while NZ and Australia attempted to observe both days. Certainly, there was no

mistaking ANZAC Day's prominence, something that was 'ours'. But now, we are seeing a new resurgence in solidarity between old allies.

Some 17 000 of our war dead are buried in War Graves Commission cemeteries in Europe, Gallipoli and the Middle East, in graves marked by headstones whose uniform design was agreed on to represent the soldiers' sense of solidarity and fellowship. Thousands more have no marked grave, and are commemorated on memorials to the missing in these cemeteries. But few relatives could afford to visit these graves, so the local War Memorial, engraved with the names of the local dead became the focus of individual and community remembrance. It is a feature of even the smallest country town in NZ.

Then finally, in 2004, our Government decided that it was time to have our own Unknown Warrior. So on Armistice Day, 11 November 2004, the bodily remains of an unidentified NZ soldier were exhumed from Caterpillar Valley in the Somme, and buried with full military honours in our National War Memorial in Wellington. He lies there beside a bronze statue of Simpson's Donkey.

We remember. We honour. We grieve. But we can take hope from the glimpses of greater gain than victory in battle. Moments where the barriers of nationality were swept away. Where goodness, nobility of spirit and selfless love shone through. And this is best expressed in the words attributed to Mustapha Kemal Ataturk: Those heroes who shed their blood and lost their lives, you are now lying in the soil of a friendly country. Therefore rest in peace. There is no difference between the Johnnies and Mehmetts to us where they lie side by side here in this country of ours. You, the mothers, who sent their sons from far away countries wipe away your tears; your sons are now lying

in our bosom and are in peace. After having lost their lives on this land they have become our sons as well.

Titiro whakamuri. Kokiri whakamua. We will remember them.