

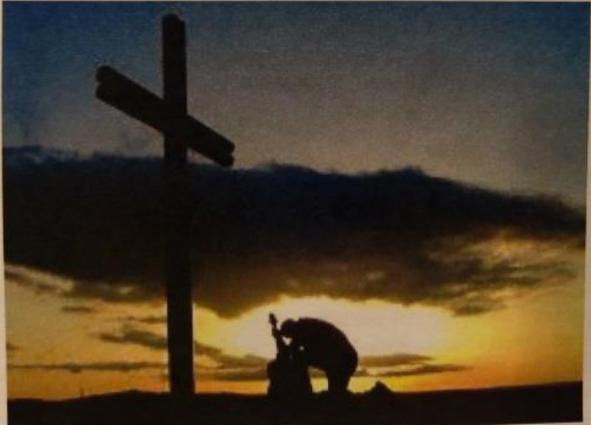
ANZAC Day Reflection

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ANZAC DAY 25 APRIL 2018
11.00 AM, ST PAUL'S CATHEDRAL
MELBOURNE

Truly, we will remember them.

*An Ecumenical Service of Lament, Repentance and
Hope for the Centenary of the First World War,
especially in 1918, the "war to end all wars",
those who said no to war,
the Aboriginal wars.*



Romans 12:2ff: *'Don't change yourselves to be like the people of this world, but let God change you inside with a new way of thinking.....'* **We can and must rearrange our priorities....**

How do we want to remember ANZAC or any war? To suggest changes in the way we think about Anzac is dangerous territory. The contemporary focus on this sacred day is changing from an inherent opposition to militarism since the 1920's to a sudden reinvigoration of ANZAC which seems to contribute to a new militarism and nationalism. Whatever this day means, we must recognise that we are all part of 'the dark ecosystem of violence' – whether towards Aboriginal people, refugees, asylum seekers, the Earth or peoples we have never met. ANZAC Day is a call us to do life differently. Your presence here today might indicate an interest for some alternative. I begin with a quote from Walter Brueggemann's *The Prophetic Imagination*: *'....real criticism begins in the capacity to grieve because that is the visceral announcement that things are not right. Only in the empire are we invited to pretend that things are all right ... And as long as the Empire can keep the pretense alive that things are all right, there will be no real grieving and no real criticism...'* When I think of saints, they often become monuments rather than a command/ challenge. Dorothy Day warned against it and in some ways people like Martin Luther King have suffered that fate.

For the past 20 years, Anzac has become impregnable; a bastion of patriotism over which words and argument cannot prevail. Are there other ways of remembering war? As we remember the dead, all, we could honour conscientious objectors who said there is 'No glory in war'; acknowledging the costs of war; working toward ways that breaks down enmity between people and seeing war and violence as the enemy; of breaking down enmity between people – seeing war and violence as the enemy; an ethic of inclusivity and recognition for all the victims – past and present -of war; choosing a national identity based on positive values of care and service rather than war; holding leaders and war enablers to account; and remembering war so as to ensure 'Never Again' as a means to a nonviolent society. (Richard Jackson) Let us not reinforce exclusive identities of friend/enemy; worthy/ unworthy victims; or let lies obscure the realities of war; or rewrite unjust wars; or myths and lies; or white-wash history; or absolve leaders; or put duty and sacrifice for the nation over above responsibility to the Other; or demand conformity and closing the space for dissent and conscientious objection; or subscribe to the broader culture structures that maintain militarism, the arms trade, war preparedness and the global culture of violence. (Richard Jackson)

In the **2017 World Day of Peace Message *Nonviolence: a Style of Politics for Peace*** Pope Francis reflected on *nonviolence* as a style of politics for peace. Whilst drawing attention to the 'piecemeal' violence around us: the wars; terrorism, organised crime; abuses suffered against migrants and victims of human trafficking; and environmental devastation, Francis said to be true followers of Jesus today includes embracing his teaching about nonviolence by building up society, communities and businesses by acting as peacemakers; showing mercy by refusing to discard people, harm the environment, or seek to win at any cost. [\[20\]](#) Through our solidarity with one another and the Earth we acknowledge everything is interconnected. *We can rearrange our priorities....by giving up any kind of commitment to violence or killing or war. That is Jesus' way is enemy love. God's voice is ringing out to us: 'listen to him'. 'Put away the sword'. 'Don't return evil for evil. Return good for evil'. **Listen to him who says 'try it my way when we** seek peace through violence: through war, through conquest, through strife, through the elimination or subduing of an enemy other, or hide behind a Just War doctrine. Let us try to do things differently - to work to build a culture of peace-just peace.*

ANZAC Day is a call to remember the many First Peoples in this country who paid in blood to defend this land that we stand on, from invasion. The First Peoples who lost their lives defending their country from invasion in the Frontier Wars. It is a call to remember those voices that said no to war and paid the price – the prophets, teachers, healers and revolutionaries, who have rebelled, worked and suffered for the cause of love and joy.

For the follower of Jesus, there a call to call to listen to his voice and 'try it my way' in the face of hurt, suffering, violence, etc.... try it my way with nonviolence, with forgiveness, with compassion and generosity. He showed us that we transform the world through the power of love - not through violence, not through war, not through killing.

A potentially violent outcome is overturned in the first reading. Abraham learned that God was a God of peace and not of sacrifice. It has no sanction in our religion whether in war, refugee camps, the use of sex slaves, human trafficking, child labour, sweat shops or capital punishment. Abraham saw that violence is not God's way. When the angel stayed Abraham's hand, it said 'Enough!' Sarah was left out. That voice of God still rings out: 'listen to him'. 'Put away the sword'. 'Don't return evil for evil. Return good for evil'.

With Mother's Day in two weeks, we forget it began as a Mother's Day for Peace in 1870 with a Proclamation where women had their eyes opened to the lies, deceit, waste, the evil sacrifice of

humanity to war in the form of their children, husbands, fathers and brothers and made a passionate demand for disarmament and peace. *'We will not have questions answered by irrelevant agencies,/Our husbands will not come to us, reeking with carnage,/For caresses and applause. Our sons shall not be taken from us to unlearn/All that we have been able to teach them of charity, mercy and patience. We, the women of one country,/Will be too tender of those of another country To allow our sons to be trained to injure theirs. /From the voice of a devastated Earth a voice goes up with/ Our own. It says: 'Disarm! Disarm! The sword of murder is not the balance of justice.'*

In the gospel today, Jesus enters the temple for one purpose – to overturn business as usual. Jesus, in the gospels, is continually interrupting, disrupting, overturning, and throwing out the business as usual which destroys lives relationships, and environments. Pope Francis stresses that 'faith and violence are incompatible.....' and that *'Peacemaking calls for courage, much more so than warfare..... the courage to say yes to encounter and no to conflict; yes to dialogue and no to violence; yes to negotiations and no to hostilities.'* In 2015, he said, *'It is not enough to talk about peace, peace must be made. To speak about peace without making it is contradictory, and those who speak about peace while promoting war, for example through the sale of weapons, are hypocrites. It is very simple.'* For Francis, Jesus' mercy is at the heart of 'shalom' and the alternative to violence.

The danger is that ANZAC Day will be only a monument rather than a command or challenge to act for peace, to find alternatives to war, to question and reflect why we are fighting in Afghanistan or anywhere else. Tasmanian Governor, Peter Underwood, in 2014 said we need to reflect more on peacemaking rather than glorifying war with such descriptions of the mythical tall, lean, bronzed and laconic ANZAC, enthusiastically and unflinchingly carrying the torch of freedom in the face of murderous enemy fire. Richard Flanagan last week also said we need to drop the sentimental myths that this day has attracted. We dishonour the dead by a perfunctory annual commemoration without thinking what we commemorate and how we can avoid what we commemorate again. Peter Underwood suggested in the 2014 that the beginning of WWI could be commemorated by declaring 2014 a year of peace. Nothing happened. What about 2018?

Political leaders today will speak movingly of the death and destruction of many Australians in Gallipoli and France, yet still want to promote an arms industry to export arms even to countries accused of war crimes and human rights violations. It is deep contradiction as we prostitute ourselves by joining 'merchants of death' (Pope Francis). What would Jesus - who said *'Put your sword back into its sheath, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword'* — do regarding our fascination for making, possessing, buying, selling, and using high tech weapons?

Not far from here, at National Gallery of Victoria, is a painting by Louis Duffy called *Christ driving out the money changers*. 16 men in business suits are in confrontation with Jesus. It is set in a graveyard, not a temple. The money changers have morphed into arms dealers trading munitions on the graves of the dead: the ultimate profit and loss indicators of their grim transactions. Jesus always presented options where none existed. He turned things upside down. Another way is possible. John shows us who Jesus is. He is in ***our midst and shows us how*** to live differently. Some people have expressed concern about Jesus' anger. Of greater concern would have been silence, as are many leaders, in the face of injustice, oppression and other acts of violence, or where religion is entangled with power, money and authority that threaten life. We do not need to rely on acts of sacred violence to remain bonded together. We need to find new ways of encountering one another as expressed the following quote: *'Interred beneath the runways and the sea are the sites of some of the first encounters between Indigenous Australians and British marines and convicts; places where they approached one another with 'emotions of pleasure, astonishment, curiosity and timidity' – exchanging gifts and gestures of introduction, touching hair, skin and clothes – each searching*

tentatively for proof of the others' humanity.' (Mark McKenna ***From the Edge: Australia's Lost Histories***).

Today we acknowledge the wounds deep not just in Australia but NZ, Ireland, India, France as well as Germany and Turkey. The latter were defending their country. They never threatened us. We gloss over many anomalies. Do we think of or acknowledge the impact of our alliances – colonial-have meant for others. We must refuse to listen to various voices that would make us more fearful and suspicious. We need to listen to different voices - those who dare us to care, to open our arms out to a world desperate for compassion and healing. We can be more.

Sadly, the churches have rejected or ignored Jesus' teaching by forming pacts with forces that promoted violence. For 1600 years they have been saddled with the Just War Doctrine. It is not/was not consistent with Jesus' life and ministry. It often functioned to legitimise and perpetuate war rather than prevent it. It established a mentality where conflict was the only response to conflict. It limited our ability to find nonviolent responses and find resources and skills need to undertake the work.

These betrayed the one who stands amongst us representing the God of nonviolence. A new framework is required which includes not limiting war - but outlawing it. The betrayal continues when they fail denounce the invasion of another country; the moral credence given to war; racism, sexism, corporate greed; obscene accumulation of property and wealth. There is hope because these are our problems and can be changed. They begin in the sanctuary of our heart. If we are interested in patriotism – there is another form: to the planet and humanity. The really fundamental changes in history have not come by government dictate, or battles, but groups of people taking little steps and sometimes in response to Jesus' 'try it my way.'

Today we are challenged to see and act differently. We have been exhorted to listen to Jesus. The message is the same: love one another, i.e., take care of one another, especially the downtrodden. It is possible that we can live together in our diversity. We can see things in a new way. We can let go of racism, to let go of an addiction to money, to let go of power and control, to let go of violence, to let go of inaction, to let go of our blindness and selfishness. We can solve international problems without war. We can see the world as a global community and to see all people as our brothers and sisters.

Pope Francis' core signature phrase is 'culture of encounter' which we need to develop. Though differences in ethnicity, religion, race, language, skin colour can breed animosity, enmity and suspicion, when there is a meeting of strangers, walls and those in our hearts can be replaced by bridges. The invitation to embrace 'the culture of encounter' is not just about seeing but looking; not just hearing, but listening; allowing ourselves to be moved with compassion. In general it includes reaching out, fostering dialogue and friendship even outside the usual circles, especially people who are neglected and ignored by the wider world.

A superb contribution to just peace was issued by the WCC in a document ***The Just Peace Companion (2012)*** alongside another ***An Ecumenical Call to Just Peace***. ***It states, 'To care for God's precious gift of creation and to strive for ecological justice are key principles of just peace. For Christians they are also an expression of the gospel's call to repent from wasteful use of natural resources and be converted daily. Churches and their members must be cautious with earth's resources, especially with water. We must protect the populations most vulnerable to climate change and help to secure their rights.'*** (p. 12).

In April 2016 a ground breaking and unprecedented gathering in Rome, co-hosted by Pax Christi International and the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, called for us to *go back to the sources of our faith and rediscover the nonviolence at the heart of the Gospel.* (Jose Henriquez). There was no intention to invent something new *but of a return to the sources – to the experience of the early church. The key goal is to outlaw war, not to legitimise or refine the criteria of war by using or teaching just war theory.* Just peace is about a vision and praxis is where peace is built up as well the prevention, or defusing, and healing the damage of violence. It's a commitment to human dignity and thriving relationships. *The goal of nonviolent resistance to injustice is to awaken humanity in every person. We spoke not only about war but about the presence of an alternative. It was neither fight, flight nor accommodation but relationships that lead to reconciliation with an oppressor. Just war criteria assume that a strategically applied use of violence under the right conditions will end violence, creating the possibility of peace.*

We contribute to peace by recommitting to the centrality of gospel nonviolence and developing practices of nonviolence and just peace. Our contribution involves speaking about and promoting nonviolent resistance to injustice and violence; to resist the waste of military spending; to humanise or illuminate the dignity of our enemies. Jesus showed us a different way: the reign of God where we work to build an inclusive community, which includes so-called enemies, by using the power of nonviolent loving, willing-to-risk-suffering action. He called for open inclusion, not narrow exclusiveness.

The final statement of the Rome conference, **'An appeal to the Catholic Church to re-commit to the centrality of Gospel nonviolence'**, called on the Catholic Church to commit in doctrine and practice to the central importance of «the Gospel of non-violence. *We cannot justify or legitimatise military violence. We have wonderful resources in the WCC and Laudato Si' that recognise that violence done to human communities is accompanied by devastating environmental destruction. Can we hear the 'cry of the earth and the cry of the poor' (LS 49). Where there is a lack of connection with the environment which is a form of violence and contributes to the activity of war, ours is to emphasise the protection of life (human and otherwise, including creation) not to destroy it.* Instead of thinking as the world thinks or doing what the world does, Jesus says 'try it my way' and I pray that we will remember that: As peacemakers let us remind the world that violence only perpetuates an endless cycle of violence and that we must not be silent. That, solving problems using the world's logic doesn't really solve anything. May we have the courage to not hide our light and not blend into the darkness.

I just want to conclude again with the quote from Walter Brueggemann's ***The Prophetic Imagination***: *'...real criticism begins in the capacity to grieve because that is the visceral announcement that things are not right. Only in the empire are we invited to pretend that things are all right ... And as long as the Empire can keep the pretense alive that things are all right, there will be no real grieving and no real criticism...'*