

Remember ~ May 30, 2010

Proverbs 8:1-4,22-31; Romans 5:1-5; John 16:12-15; Psalm 8

There is a song from the musical “Cats” that I know most of us here remember. I think it is the only “hit” song from that play. It is entitled “Memory.” One of the verses is this:

*Daylight--I must wait for the sunrise—
I must think of a new life--
And I mustn't give in
When the dawn comes tonight will be a memory too
And a new day--will begin.*

That verse contains an eternal truth. Eternal truths may be found in the most unexpected places in life—even in Broadway songs. If we have lived long enough, I believe we begin to see this.

The truth is that, our lives are made of memories, things, events and people from the past. While we cannot escape our pasts, we must learn not to dwell in them. We mustn't give in to rehashing what has been while still keeping the capacity to stir old memories into life, on occasion, and enjoy them.

Our Bible is a collection of memories allowing those who live by its words to remember the past that has established our religion, while always pointing us toward the future and change for our selves and our world.

Our world, as anyone who thinks, knows, is desperately in need of change. If we are able to move forward with some sort of unity, we will all have a future together. That is true for our small community here as well as for the global community. That little phrase “Act locally, but think globally” needs to become more fully incorporated in the way we live and move and have our being. It is time we understand that, for every action we undertake there is an equal and opposite reaction that somehow affects not only us but **all** of us. It is the old story of a butterfly flapping its wings in one part of the world and moving air currents everywhere. Consider the oil spill in the Gulf.

We see in the readings from the Letter to the Romans and Luke that a future is promised us—a future that might have to be ground out through times of suffering alternating with times of hope—a hope that will sustain us through the darkest times in our history as individuals and as a nation.

We have been told time and time again that if we do not remember our history, our past, we are doomed to repeat it. Being able to remember and adjust is a part of wisdom which has called to us from the very beginning of time. We need to pause and reflect and determine, with God's help and guidance, to make all things new again. All events in life present opportunities for learning, whether they are happenings in our personal lives, in our faith community or in our country. We can always learn to do things in a better way.

If we stop and think a little about the decades that have gone by, we will see that we do not always do a very good job of remembering and learning. Examples abound, both personally and on a far larger scale for most of us.

I was a college student in the sixties—that seems impossible to me—but I was. Did I, perhaps, take part in some of the activities of the sixties? Yes. I remember **our** war of great concern. Did I take up a placard or even two or three and take part in a few marches? Yes. Was I arrested? Almost. I had an angelic countenance at the time that often got me off the hook. Did I ardently believe in the causes I would march for? Yes. Did I believe in the need for peace and a world in which understanding and acceptance for others and their viewpoints were essential to the well-being of us all? Did I believe that others should be honored at best and tolerated at least for their thoughts? Most times. I try to do better now.

But I asked myself the other day if we had learned anything from our sad war—a war many opposed while loving and supporting those we knew to be warriors. It is evident some have learned and others have not. That is simply history. It is time, I believe, to think and learn and find new pathways to peace all over again.

“Why?” you may ask. Not so much for those of us who have not lived the history of war, but for those who have. For those who live on and cannot forget the horrors and for those who died that we may live and, perhaps, learn from their ultimate sacrifice. For those who suffered and endured and hoped.

This is Memorial Day weekend—a time for picnics and the emergence of white shoes, and memories. We negate what it is all about, if we do not recall the lives that have been lost and that continue to be lost to allow us all the freedoms we enjoy.

A piece of poetry, familiar to most, if not all of us, was penned by a man named John McCrae, a physician who served in World War I.

He had gone through a bloody battle and had spent seventeen days treating men from many different nations. One death affected him deeply, that of a friend and a former student. Major McCrae had performed the funeral service in the absence of a chaplain.

The next day, sitting on the back of an ambulance, he eased his pain by writing a poem. He never expected it to be published and threw it away. Another officer found it and sent it to papers in England. *Punch* published it in December of 1915.

These are the words that continue to live on:

In Flanders Fields

*In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.*

*We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders fields.*

*Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.*

We “break faith” when we forget to remember. Whether it is in the realm of our religion, in the arenas of our personal lives or on the broader scale of human history. Wisdom calls us to take up the torch and to keep the faith by remembering all those who have gone on before us and why. No less have the voices from the graves of Flanders fields and from the graves of all who have fought for our free way of life called out to us to learn from the past and to move forward into a bright new future with peace and understanding for all humankind. The future of the world depends on us taking up a new torch and moving forward always remembering to remember.

*Daylight--I must wait for the sunrise
I must think of a new life--
And I mustn't give in
When the dawn comes tonight will be a memory too
And a new day--will begin.*

-- Amen