

November 11,2018
32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.
Beside restful waters he leads me

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. Amen

I had another homily prepared for this weekend. But it occurred to me this morning that since tomorrow is both Veterans Day and Armistice Day, we need to spend our time here today remembering and reflecting on these two events. To help us do this, I would like to share with you an article I read this morning. It is entitled, "*100 years after World War I's armistice, Recounting the human cost 'over there'*". NCR, Nov 10, 2018, by Patricia Lefevere

"At 11 a.m. Nov. 11th, Europeans in many nations will pause, stop work, listen to ringing church bells, bugle calls and dirges while public officials, clergy and descendants of the honored dead recall anew the human price of the nearly four years of war (1914-18) that ended 100 years ago.

"Fighting engaged a score of European armies, plus militia from Africa, the Middle East, India, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United States, which sent 2 million troops "over there" in 1917 and 1918. Of them, 116,516 Americans lost their lives.

"It is hard to comprehend that some 65 million men — and 8 million horses — were mobilized into land, sea and air forces between July 1914 and Nov. 11, 1918, the day the slaughter stopped with a cease-fire that had been drafted aboard a train hidden in the French forest of Compiègne. At war's end, some 32 million soldiers and civilians were killed, wounded or missing. Adieu, a generation and its progeny.

"In spite of these grim realities, the Allies — France, Britain and her colonies, Belgium, Italy, Serbia and a host of European countries — celebrated the defeat of Germany and the end of trench warfare. Living underground for months on end meant enduring cold, lack of sanitation and sleep, K-rations, rats, lice, mud and often water thigh-high. To emerge and go "over the top," as British Tommies termed it, risked exposure to gunfire, poison gas, the point of a bayonet, or at times strafing from enemy planes. But it could also mean sunlight, fresh air and the scent of the seasons, as soldiers recorded in their war diaries.

Patricia says, "My uncle, Jack Murray, was in the great war. He spoke admiringly of European horses that had pulled the artillery's gear and weapons. He was once perched in a tree observing enemy movements through a pair of field glasses. His commanding officer ordered him out of the tree when he perceived the enemy advancing. Seconds later, the tree was blown apart by a German shell, but Jack had both feet safely on the ground.

While women did not go to war as combatants, thousands went to factories where they made uniforms, armaments and food products for the troops. Many learned to drive and hundreds became ambulance drivers and medical aides on or near the front. In Britain, women won the right to vote, but they, their children and the elderly did not avoid suffering; 109,000 died due to food shortages and over 183,000 by the Spanish flu in Europe during the conflict.

"Often enough, we've heard, but paid insufficient attention to, the adage that the seeds of the next war are sown in the just-concluded conflict. Never was this truer than with the Treaty of Versailles, drafted in Paris over six months by the heads of Britain, France and America and their deputies.

"When the Germans were summoned to sign the Treaty of Versailles, they were shocked by its terms. Germany felt humiliated and the victim of resentment. In just two decades, the world would see Germany rise from the ashes of defeat to take vengeance on most of Europe."

Nothing is more uplifting than seeing Flanders' fields on a beautiful spring day when floral trees disguise the granite corridors of buried corpses. Men who died within a few meters of one another in a war of attrition that allowed hardly any progress by the advancing army now lie ever so close for another aeon. 368 Americans rest there.

In Flanders field 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 field!

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 field.

Today is also Veterans Day, a day of mixed emotions for those who are serving our country, some of who have given their lives doing so. Let our commemoration of these men and women begin by praying to Mary, our mother, who knows what it is like to lose a son.

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. Amen