The Parish Churches of S Philip and S Augustine
and S Matthew with S Mary the Virgin Newcastle

Homily for Remembrance Sunday (9th November) 2025

The form of remembrance that we use on this day feels as if it has come to us from time immemorial. However, in the wake of the Great War, there was much debate about how that terrible conflagration, which ravaged the lives of so many millions should be commemorated. In the end, they settled on silence; there are other bits and pieces, since silence in gatherings of people must have a setting; but the silence is, so to speak, the *res et sacramentum* of our remembrance.

People often fall silent when they are overwhelmed by whatever it is that they behold - beauty or horror: in this instance, of course, horror. We speak of ourselves or others being lost for words by what we see or hear. Today, we are lost for words in our contemplation of the terror inflicted by the wars, which have punctuated our history.

In our own day, silence is a rare thing. Everyone wants to talk, everyone wants to express a view, everyone wants to respond and react to what they experience. Even if there is no noise, there is not silence as social media bellows a zillion opinions and feelings.

Silence can be an expression of humility when it recognises that we do not have the capacity to encompass in our words and actions the enormity of what we behold. It also helps to ensure that we do not make this all about ourselves - another contemporary fashion - but leaves the focus where it should be: on the sacrifice made by others for the greater good.

Yet, as we shall articulate a little later, "The voice of prayer is never silent." Even when we are lost for words God hears and understands the inchoate call from our hearts and His Word speaks to us: and He, of course, is never lost for words - never overwhelmed by even the worst that human folly and failure can wreak.

As we are told in Saint Matthew's Gospel, "Do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you."

This Word given to us by the Spirit the Church has encapsulated in the form of a Requiem Mass wherein we restate the divine revelation that no matter how terrible the manner of one's parting from the world, we are not separated from hope: the sure and certain hope founded on God's promise that Christ has conquered the power of death to annihilate our lives. We plead that saving Sacrifice of Christ for those who have died. .It may be our voices, but it is God's Word, which is spoken.

It is in the strength of this Word spoken by God that even as we weep over the grave, we can make our song, "Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia," confident that those who we mourn and remember can rest in God's eternal love and peace.