

## ANZAC MASS HOMILY 2018

For an increasing number of citizens across Australia and New Zealand the observance of Anzac Day begins with early rising, preparation and a journey to gather together with others before dawn at a place made holy by memory, admiration and wonder. Many who cannot travel still rise to participate through radio and television. The Dawn Service takes place in many different places each with its own physical environment ranging from alongside the sea, in the midst of large cities, in front of large memorials, at smaller ones at the crossroads of rural towns, right through to edges of fields and the foothills. One of the common elements in these gatherings is the quietness and sombreness of those who gather. This stillness provokes a holy moment of reflection and wonder and a unique sense of connectedness with those who are being remembered. We, both as individuals and as community remember, them.

Our First Reading, from the Book of Wisdom was written only about 100 years before Christ during a time of great persecution, internal conflict, social rejection, suffering and bewilderment. The message is clear: “The souls of the virtuous are in the hands of God, no torment shall ever touch them. ... those who are faithful will live with him in love; for grace and mercy await those he has chosen.”

In a special way the relationship between dying, service and eternal presence is combined in our Gospel reading too. The context helps us because the text comes immediately before Jesus’ passion, death and resurrection. We remind ourselves that we are still in the time of Easter. We heard: “If a man serves me, he must follow me, wherever I am my servant will be there too. If anyone serves me, my Father will honour him.”

We also remind ourselves that Faith is not, like that which our medals and badges and titles signify, a personal achievement or honour won or awarded but is a free gift from God. It is not knowledge acquired but it is more like a personal embrace or a sense of closeness with the Divine that we can respond to. This is certainly attested to in many of the writings that have come down to us from those we remember today. Faith certainly helps us through all the experiences of life – good and bad, pleasant and unpleasant. And because Faith is a gift from God it brings with it that eternal dimension that gives substance to our belief that our prayers here and now have an effect on others even on those who have been called into eternal life. Our observance then is enlightened by this gift of faith and it enlivens our hope and helps us to see things as God might see them. It adds an important dimension to our observance today.

Following the example of duty and motivated by the same and timeless sense of faith and closeness to our Lord, we come again to join in our communion celebration of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus and entrust to him the souls of those who have died in war so that He may lead them into the Father's House to receive and experience the honour that Jesus promised would come from His Father. And, as they would certainly want us to, let us pray earnestly and work hard for the peace and justice that God desires, His People deserve and for which so many have died.

Eternal rest grant to them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shone upon them. May they rest in peace. Amen.