



I am a fortunate man. I have never had to take up arms to fight for God or my country; I have not lived in a country or a village under attack; I have never heard the sounds of war: gunshot, cannonball or missile; I have not seen the devastation of war; I have not experienced the ravages of war:

homelessness, depression, starvation, hopelessness; and although I had a great uncle die on the battlefields of France during the First World War I have not in my lifetime lost a family member, relative or friend due to war; and I have never had to suffer the effects that war has on a country's economy or a people's freedoms. Yes, I am truly blessed to be an Australian in this generation.

Yet through my father, now deceased twenty years, I feel a certain connection to the horrors of war. My father was a soldier with the 2/3rd infantry battalion in the Second World War and saw active service in New Guinea. Although he did not talk much about it, I know he had a few near misses and that he had friends shot down dead beside him. I know that this could so easily have been my Dad and that I am lucky to have ever been born.

I know some of you here today have experienced war firsthand either as combatants or civilians; I know that some of you have lost loved ones to war; and I know that some of you still suffer in one way or another the effects of war.

With the monuments we erect in our town centres, with the commemorations we observe on Anzac Day, and with the speeches we give and listen to at these events, we attempt to give due recognition to the courage, heroism, and self-sacrifice made by so many men and women, and we seek to make sense of all the suffering and loss and to see a higher purpose or greater good in it.

It is important, even essential, to do this "lest we forget". It is not a glorification of war but a mark of a civilised society which seeks to remember our past, to at times be inspired by it, and at times to learn from the mistakes in it "lest we forget". We must not forget how horrible war is; we must not forget the courage and self-sacrifice of ordinary men and women who are at times asked to do extraordinary things; and we must not forget that sometimes you do have to stand and defend human life and liberty.

We who come to Mass for Anzac Day realize that monuments, commemorations, and speeches are not enough today. Something more is needed. God is needed. We need to bring it all to Him: All the loss of life, all the injustice, all the suffering – our own or our loved ones or that of total strangers, needs to be brought to God and offered to Him. Whilst each of us may have somebody in particular in mind and heart as we pray we bring it *all* to God. We make no judgement here about which side has been in the right and which side in the wrong, we simply entrust to God those who have died, those who suffer, and those in authority charged with the most weighty of decisions.

We pray to Jesus Christ who suffered, died, and rose again, and whose suffering and death was never a waste of time and effort, just as the life and death of those who serve their country in war is likewise never a waste of time or effort. Lest we forget!