

Patronal Feast of the Monastery of Christ Our Saviour

It's hugely impressive the care and devotion that is given to the dead of the many wars we inflict on one another for a whole variety of reasons and evoking all sorts of emotions. It's often spoken of in terms of sacrifice – lives given for the sake of others. Others are more cynical: lives wasted for the lives of others. Some see it in terms of glory and others in terms of vainglory and so on. We can see such conflict of view in today's readings- the struggle to locate the sacred or dismiss it as mere talk, wishful thinking. Who is this Jesus who locates God in his own flesh and blood, who talks of resurrection? He is everyman, each of us a sacred vessel, the place where God dwells; nonsense the cynics say and the horror of war speaks strongly in their favour, each army, each man and woman claiming God as on their side. We will not solve the mystery of it all in debate but in remembering we may get close. “Do this in memory of me” – remember this sacrifice, don't try to understand it, just do it. Honour the dead and something changes. It's a recognition that something more is going on in us than the stupidity or tragedy of war admits. All sorts of moral lessons can be drawn and we can fight fresh wars over them. No, just remember the dead and something living prevails. Here it is in a beautiful mix of the sacred and profane – from a collection of war poems and diaries from a few of the many who fought their way through North Africa and Italy in the second world war – this by A W Crowther (no biography known)

Wayside Crucifix

A tank lies gutted in the ditch beneath...
 English or German? That's no matter now;
 The pinioned man with thorns upon his brow
 Looks down upon a grave that bears no wreath,
 Beside the wrecked and blackened iron sheath.
 The toil bent peasant leaves his healing plough
 To gaze upon the sacrifice and bow
 His head, pon'dring the gift that guns bequeath
 Unto his ravaged soil: the human clay
 Moulded from other dust – and hither brought
 To jest and suffer for a space, to slay
 And mingle with an alien earth, blood- bought.
 The slain will guard the slain till rising day
 When he shall know the end for which he fought.

Or not, some might say. But there we go again on another round of wars. Remember them and let emotion speak.

We can say that also for the many who have lived and died and worshipped here in this Monastery of Christ Our Saviour over the past 45 years. Remember them in the hope of resurrection for us all.

Br John Mayhead
 Monastery of Christ Our Saviour