

Family Prayer

ANZAC Day- Praying for Peace

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We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians, who opened their hearts and minds to the mystery and goodness of the Creator, and recognise their enduring connection to Country. We show respect to the Elders who shared memories and traditions through the stories of Elders, and broke bread to share table in community with one another. We invite you to join the journey towards transformative healing and renewed hope for the nation's First Peoples.

Context

ANZAC Day marks the commemoration of Australian and New Zealand military “the ANZACS” who died in their valiant landing at Gallipoli in the early hours of 25 April 1915 during World War I. Although the day was originally most closely associated with the Gallipoli landing, it has become a national day of remembering and mourning loss through war and conflict. A day to remember all service persons past and present, from all conflicts, and a day to grieve the loss of all who have died or endured the horrors of war.

Scripture

Gospel attributed to John (14:23-29)

A peace the world cannot give is my gift to you.

Jesus said to his disciples: “if anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we shall come to him and make our home with him. Those who do not love me do not keep my words. And my word is not my own: it is the word of the one who sent me. I have said these things to you while still with you: but the Advocate, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name will teach you everything and remind you of all I have said to you.

Peace, I bequeath to you, my own peace I give you, a peace this world cannot give, this is my gift to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid. You heard me say: I am going away and shall return. If you loved me, you would have been glad to know that I am going to the Father, for the father is greater than I. I have told you this now before it happens so that when it does happen you may believe.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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Reflection

Above you will find an image of a painting by William Longstaff titled- Menin Gate at midnight. It is considered one of the most famous and moving WWI paintings and was completed after Flagstaff attended the opening of a memorial at the Menin Gate in 1927. The Menin Gate is in the town of Ypres in Belgium and marks the place where thousands of troops marched toward the front line in World War I. Tens of thousands of soldiers remain 'missing' in France and Belgium including Australia's 6000 whose names are now engraved on the walls of the memorial.[1]

Flagstaff was deeply moved by what he witnessed at the dedication and was unable to sleep. He went out and walked the Menin Road where he met a woman, who was also walking. When he inquired after her wellbeing, the woman responded that she was "Here with her boys" and that she "could feel them all around her." So profoundly moved by this experience Flagstaff returned to his studio, and painted Menin Gate at midnight in a single session. Poppies can be seen in the fields as well as hundreds of steel helmets, a harvest of men, rising from the cornfields, a stark reminder of the horror of war.[2]

Each night at 8pm traffic is stopped at the Menin Gate while members of the local Fire Brigade sound the 'Last Post' in the roadway under the Memorial's arches. A ritual of remembering and perhaps also of hoping that the peace bequeathed to us by Jesus can become a reality.

References

[1] The Australian War Memorial, Menin Gate at midnight, April 4th 2007, <https://www.awm.gov.au/articles/blog/the-menin-gate-memorial>.

[2] Australian War Memorial, "Menin Gate at Midnight#AnzacAtHome2020"

<https://www.youtube.com/@AustWarMemorial>, 6:16,
<https://youtu.be/XkpETg7dvTE?si=Be8dvX84ANebK4yf>.

Prayer

The power of remembering as part of grieving is a notion familiar to Catholics as we commemorate the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus in our Mass every Sunday. This 'remembering' ritual inspires us to see how we can do life differently; it is future oriented. ANZAC day should have the same impact for us. As we commemorate and pray for those who have died in war, let us also pray ardently for peace.

Lord God,

Help us this day to remember the sacrifice of the first ANZACs, Australian and New Zealanders, and the generations of men, women and children who have died for the cause of liberty and peace.

Help us to go out into the world in peace, to be brave and hold on to what is good.

Help us to never pay back wrong for wrong and to respect and give honour to every person made in your image and likeness.

Lord, we pray for peace in our hearts, in our homes and in our world.

Amen

Call to Action

- View one or two of [The War Memorial's](#) many resources with your family.
- Make a [paper](#) poppy or [crochet](#) a poppy to wear on ANZAC Day
- Listen to a Podcast together e.g. [Up Close with Modern Veterans](#)
- Read a [picture book](#) which tells the story of the ANZACs (many of these are available to read aloud online).
- Light a candle, share the prayer from above and stand for one minute in silence.

Image

Menin gate at midnight, William Flagstaff 1927, Public Domain