

N.B. Embargo : 9 November 1997, 11.30 a.m.

REMEMBRANCE SERVICE AT ENNISKILLEN

**St. Macartin's Cathedral, Enniskillen
Sunday 9 November 1997**

**ADDRESS BY THE MOST REVEREND DR ROBIN EAMES,
ARCHBISHOP OF ARMAGH, PRIMATE OF ALL IRELAND**

*"Then those who feared the Lord talked with
each other and the Lord listened and heard.
A scroll of remembrance was written in his
presence concerning those who feared the
Lord and honoured his name ..."*

Malachi 3 : 16

For all of us who were here in Enniskillen ten years ago Remembrance Sunday is something much more than reflection on the supreme sacrifice of two world wars. When we say '*we will remember them*' our thoughts have a very special and poignant meaning. For families in Enniskillen who lost loved ones at the war memorial on Remembrance Sunday 1987 and for the loved ones of those who continue to carry on their hearts, minds and bodies the consequences of that morning this is a very personal, a very private occasion. We respect those feelings as we pay tribute to the immense courage and example of those who have borne so much in public and in private. Ten years ago Enniskillen became the focus of world attention. Since then private feelings and private emotions have been under the scrutiny of media attention. The bearing, the dignity,

the human courage and the Christian example of so many have been an inspiration to us all. I pay tribute to those who have shown us what real courage and faith means. Ten years ago Enniskillen represented loss, tragedy and sorrow. Today Enniskillen represents hope, resilience and vision for the future. Today memories of that morning a decade ago will never dim - but no praise is too great for what the people of Enniskillen have done with their memories.

I like the words of William Manning : *"The chief value of an anniversary is to call unto greater faithfulness in the time that is left."*

We have to recognise that time passes and the passing of the days bring different situations and different challenges. But I for one believe that as our Province strives to build a better future that future will be much less than it should be if for any reason those who have suffered become the forgotten ones. We cannot, we dare not allow that to happen. I believe that every step of the peace process and every agreement proposed must recognise that fact. Out of suffering comes healing. Out of the past must come a better future. But those who have been lost and those who have suffered loss are not just a part of that past. They deserve to be and must be an integral part of the future.

'Remembrance' is a word of many parts. It is one of the most emotive terms in our English language. Like many words of deep meaning we tend to use it at times with little thought for its real significance. It stands

for human memories of the past, for memories of faces, voices, the touch of a hand, human friendship - it stands for events and happenings in our family life or the life of our community - it stands for images, pictures, impressions. It is a word of reflection - a sombre word, for our memories are themselves a strange mixture of good and bad, happiness and sorrow. There are things in life we want to forget just as there are those we recall with pride and satisfaction. **'Remembrance'** is that sort of word. Perhaps the real truth is that more important than **what** we remember is **how** we remember - and what effect those memories have on us as people here and now. As someone has written -

'remembrance is what makes us what we are ...'

As the years pass and new generations reach adulthood, as one November gives way to another, the events of two world wars fade into history. They become the seeds of novels or TV dramas. They are mentioned in history lessons. As each year passes fewer and fewer can say "I was there". Many attempts have been made to suggest how and what the nation should remember on Remembrance Sunday. Theories abound. As a community we feel the great obligation to pause today to pay tribute to the fallen - we all share that moment at eleven o'clock with a great surge of pride amidst the sorrow.

Even today in the new Europe and the new Pacific area emerging around us those words from a distant land and a distant time still hold their meaning :

"When you go home tell them of us and say, for their tomorrow we gave our today."

Such words as those transcend national identity, transcend community ethos and outlive changing outlooks. The sheer human waste of life, the end of hopes and human love - the unbelievable tragedy of war is itself the reminder that war is the ultimate failure. War represents the breakdown of agreements, war represents the fracture of communication, war represents the selfish ambition of uncontrolled nationalism, war represents greed and cruelty. To take up arms for what can be called a *just cause* does not diminish those facts. Today's sophisticated earth of international organisations cannot prevent Bosnia or the Gulf. Today's enlightenment cannot produce instant peace in Northern Ireland. Beyond the tapestry of loss and death of war lie the seeds of conflict - and those seeds lie deep in the human heart and mind.

'Remembrance' is indeed a strange word. But what was it we said just now - it is what we do with our remembrance which really matters. Time we are told heals. Memories dim. But the truth is for most of us - we can push the past back into history, but we can never forget.

As I recall Enniskillen ten years ago, even as I recall standing at the door of this Cathedral as we waited for a parade which did not arrive, the experiences of the rest of that day will never leave me. Yet my personal

memories are nothing to those of so many here today. Nor are the emotions of **my** generation which have inherited *'the tomorrow'* for which so many gave *'their today'* all those years ago in Europe, Africa, the Pacific and the Middle East, nor are our emotions anything compared with those of you who still recall 1914 - 1918 and 1939 - 1945 vividly. Yet in each case time **has** moved on. As we pray that a new generation may never again be called upon to lay down its life in war the faith we hold, the God we believe in, the Christ we lean upon - all speaks of good overcoming evil, of healing after the wounds, of peace after turmoil - of hope and vision after the suffering.

So many of you here have given us hope as you have spoken of it and lived it out in your lives. It is not as a despondent, hopeless or wandering people that we join in our remembrance today. It is as a people of determination, resilience - and hope - that we cherish our memories but look to the future of the world and to the future of our own land. Hope is eternal. Without it we are nothing. Under God let us remember them all with pride and love.

What was it we read in the third chapter of Malachi - under God let us *"who fear the Lord"* talk with each other for we know the Lord is listening. Let us remember - but let us turn that remembrance away from the darkness as we ourselves become beacons of hope and vision for a future which together we can achieve....