

**Remembrance Sunday 2026 - Memory Lane is Closed**

**A Homily by Fr Robbie Low**

***Readings: Wisdom 6:12-16, Ps 63, 1 Thessalonians 4: 13-18, Matthew 25: 1-13***

From a poem by Robert Gaudson:

*‘I cannot forget and I will not forgive*

*So runs the rhyme on the road to Hell.*

*You are my foe for as long as I live.*

*Here, in the dark, there’s a burning smell.*

*Each little trespass unforgiven*

*Unreconciled, unhealed, left raw*

*Shuts tight and locks the Gate of Heaven*

*Forges the fiery road to war.’*

All over our land, come the eleventh hour, the solemn military panoply will assemble with dark clothed supporters around those precious stone memorials at the centre of our towns and villages whereon are engraved the names of those we never knew but to whom we owe much.

We will gather and ‘remember’. It is not in any ordinary sense for, truth to tell, most of us gathering there can have no memory of the events that

brought us here. We are recalling those things which are of lasting significance and which have shaped or given opportunity to who we are.

It is a corporate act of retrieving the past and locating it, for a brief moment, in our present.
We remember in order to avoid the clumsy and foolish errors of sinful Man that led to such a costly sacrifice.
We remember and both seek and dispense the forgiveness that emanates from the Cross of Christ, whose risen body ever bears the marks of the Sacrifice at the centre of history, at the place where the battle for the salvation of Man was most keenly and decisively fought.

Remembrance is a sacred duty. It is what we do every time we come to Mass. It is supremely where we remember who we are and whence we come and to what distant and glorious destiny we are called.
But it is also a deeper act of remembrance in that profoundly Biblical sense, that is to say a place where the event in time becomes, now lodged in eternity, now accessible and re-presentable in time. So the Calvary is on the humblest altar where the Mass of the Universal Church is offered.

This is the grand scheme of things. At a simple human and secular level, remembrance has become increasingly problematical.

A couple of years ago, while I was covering in another parish, an elderly lady sat next to me at the coffee after Mass. Amid gentle tears, she told me that she suffered from the opposite of remembrance – dementia – from the root of the verb *dimenticare* – to forget. Her mind was now a *tabula rasa* – a blank slate. She had no past, no memories, no sweet familiarities upon which to depend. She had no story to share. She existed from unknown to unknown with no handholds in reliable reality but the emerging and ever terrifying present.

Of course none of us truly exist in the real present.
God alone exists in the eternal present and in time, which accounts for His Name – I AM – the first personal singular of the verb ‘to be’.

We are creatures of the past. Everything that happens is inevitably past tense. From the moment these words leave my lips to your ears they are instantly past. We are bits of living history.

We are but shuffling sacks of memory. Hence Man's constant need to tell his story and hence our well - founded terror of the modern plague of dementia. We examine ourselves, as age creeps on, for any increased signs of the advance of this cruel enemy which will cut us off from all we have known and loved.

Is our failing memory simply the penalty of our longevity or is there something more sinister at work? The name of someone I have known for twenty years eludes me when I have to introduce them. An urgent ransack of the crumbling files of my cranial database may eventually lead to the retrieval of that information in minutes or hours……. or not at all. But, whatever the case, too late for its needful use.

Similarly, in neuro-degeneration, those things, those physical actions, previously on automatic-pilot, become a challenge. We take for granted that our car key will fit in the place on the steering column without looking. That we know the way to our bathroom blindfold in the night. We never needed to hold the wall and feel for the familiar reassurance of the door jamb to guide us home. Turning over in bed was not an issue but , when memory fails, we are faced with analysing and instructing each one of the many and co-ordinated movements which go into this, previously imagined, one simple effort. We have taken for granted these little familiarities which are, in truth, highly sophisticated calibrations of the control panel – a control panel which is degrading daily.

All around is forgetfulness, individual, corporate, national and civilisational and its ubiquity and catastrophic effect only serves to highlight the precious and salvific gift of memory and remembrance.

The crisis of Remembrance is not restricted to the tragedy of the individual. Most perniciously the burgeoning effects of civilisational dementia or cultural amnesia are ever more visible in our Western society.

We have largely forgotten God. In so doing, we have forgotten our origin and our end. We have forgotten, indeed, who we are. We have forgotten both our purpose and our destiny as a people and a nation. Our culture and our continent has been constantly degrading as it has detached

itself from its Christian roots and the result is a mental and political health crisis of previously unimaginable proportions.

A brief glance at newspapers on the Government's new legislative programme, which threatens to end free speech, criminalise the Church and prosecute parents who deny the sovereignty of the State over family life and love, should be enough to signal anew that 'this way madness lies'.

The dementia has overtaken our culture because there is no remembrance. The howling of disordered and disgraced lobby groups is preferred to the millennia long fruits of our Judeo-Christian roots. We have forgotten God. Novelty and nonsense trump wisdom and worship.

So…..while we cannot, in all probability, rescue a decadent culture – only wholesale conversion would make that possible – we can come here to the place of Remembrance, the Mass. We can join with the angels and the saints and invite the Sacrifice of the Calvary into our midst and, being thus sustained and nourished and encouraged, go out into this confused and conflicted and rootless world and witness to the truth.

We are the real Remembrancers – and small though we are, so much now depends on us in Christ's mission of salvation among our people.

The war is real. The battle lines are drawn. And only Jesus Christ can bring the peace for which we fervently long …….
And we, brothers and sisters, are His ambassadors.