

PS 129

For just on 50 yrs. the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sun. of November, nearest to the anniversary date of the armistice which ended the first World War, has been Remembrance Sunday. We pray <sup>now</sup> for the dead of 2 world wars — but there have been and there are other wars in which young soldiers, and innocent civilians of all ages have died and are dying today. Let's remember all these dead in our prayers today, and not just today but especially throughout <sup>the whole</sup> month of prayer for the those who've died.

### PRAYERS

I'd like you to listen carefully now, and prayerfully, to a piece of ~~music~~ <sup>music</sup> which intertwines the ancient liturgical chant of requiem Mass and a bitter poem of protest against war — the Agnus Dei movement of Benjamin Britten's "War Requiem".

~~THE~~ Lamb of God who takest away the sins of the world, give them rest; Lamb of God who takest away the sins of the world, give them rest; Lamb of God who takest away the sins of the world, give them eternal rest — and Wilfred Owen's poem:

One ever hangs where shelled roads part.  
In this war He too lost a limb,  
But His disciples hide apart;  
And now the Soldiers bear with Him.

Near Golgotha strolls many a priest,  
And in their faces there is pride  
That they were flesh-marked by the Beast  
By whom the gentle Christos died.

The scribes on all the people shove  
And bend allegiance to the state,  
But they, who love the greater love  
Lay down their life; they do not hate.

The piece ends with a simple requited plea "Give us peace"

Dona nobis pacem — give us peace. If Owen's poems which inspired Britten's War Requiem, or their interweaving in the music with the hallowed words of the liturgy, are disconcerting, perhaps it's because war itself, at least as we've known <sup>it</sup> in our own lifetimes is or should be so disconcerting to a Christian conscience. Its horrors and realities seem to be beyond human comprehension — and once it's over, how easily we forget what little we did learn. Nations mourn their dead and salute their gallantry. But she prays for those who killed them, for the ruined lives, broken families, bitter hearts the injustice that every war leaves as an ugly sore among men?

Every war is the result and a symptom of the huge stupidity, pride, blindness, hatred of men — and we cannot, any of us, exempt ourselves from blame; for as long as we have not submitted ourselves entirely to the rule of God in our hearts & lives, as long as there is anything wanting in our love of God and of our fellow men in Him, there is present in our lives the germ that every day, somewhere in the world, has grown into the vast senseless tragedy of war.

When Pope Paul addressed the United Nations two years ago in an anguished appeal for an end to bloodshed between nations — War, never no more — it was not only that divided body that was moved & touched by the depth of his anxiety & sincerity. His appeal struck a chord in the hearts of all men of goodwill. But today

there is still war and hatred, in Vietnam, in the Middle East, in Burma in Africa, in South America. There is still violence, in Tokyo, in the United States, in countless places throughout the world — some of it, noisily, in the name of peace. Will mankind never learn? Who can we learn from, except from God who made us, who sent His Son among us with the unpopular & difficult message of selfless love. But even with this, there'll always be weeds in the harvest-field. The peace of Christ is a peace of justice and love under the rule & law of His Father & Ours. It is not "peace at any price"; nor can it come about until mankind has learned to know & love Him and to realize its own utter helplessness and weakness despite its great achievements.

War is horrible. As we remember <sup>OW</sup> dead, let us especially pray for and mourn all the countless millions of people who have died cruelly & pointlessly on account of the folly of men; let us pray for ourselves too, that we may learn Christ's message and show by the way we live how God wants all men to live, in peace & union with Him.

Let us pray: [Plan for Peace]