

What a week has just ended. Disputed elections, threats of lawsuits, debates and votes in our parliament, church leaders saying they were not consulted about the lockdown! Providentially one thing is needed more than anything else and we are going to get it. Two minutes of silence. This year around the world we need time to stop and reflect.

Of course, we remember, and we should, all those who have died in war. We also remember what they died for and the consequences of any war. This is a time for me to put thoughts into an experience which places Remembrance Sunday in the right overall context of looking back, of mourning, and of a resolve for a different if not better world, thoughts and ideas we can all share.

On a visit to Cologne some years ago now, we stumbled across a new gallery dedicated to an artist we did not know. Käthe Kollwitz was a sculptor and also an artist using engraving, woodcut or pencil sketches. She recorded working people but mostly mothers and children who were going through deprivation of many kinds. Her husband was a doctor and they lived and worked in Berlin where today there is a gallery of her work.



What is relevant to our thinking today is that her son Peter was killed in action in October 1914. That loss stopped all creativity for some years. Then from 1927 to 1932 she worked on a great sculpture portraying their loss. It is called 'Grieving

Parents' and is set today in the German War Cemetery at Diksmuide in Western Flanders.

On one memorable year with my son we found this cemetery and the sculptures hidden away down a lane just behind where the German front lines were in 1918. They convey a universal kind of sadness.

We of course always go to British and Commonwealth cemeteries. We marvel at the Lutyens designed large ones and we are moved by the small ones in many villages. We are stunned each year at the ages of those remembered. Many so very young. On this Remembrance Weekend we all remember every one of them. In a great act of creativity, we have been able to tell the story of our parish and of our families at St Olaves.

For me on this particular Remembrance Sunday that sculpture of Grieving Parents conveys the mood of these troubling times. There has to be an overwhelming atmosphere of sadness - for those lost in war, for those lost through Covid, for those who live without a sense of hope. It is the loss of that hope which we should always mourn.

In today's Gospel we are asked by Our Lord always to be prepared to see, and on occasions surprised by, signs of hope in what can seem a lost and grieving world. St Paul in our Epistle says the same: 'We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about those who have died, so that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope'.

Our two minutes of silence is the space to remember that we can and must grieve. With the hope which faith

brings, sadness can move on to the kind of desperate creativity which Kathy Kollwitz offers to all who see her work. It is that hope born of sadness that we are all called on to remember in today's silence.