

Memories and Remembrance

Garden of Remembrance

A great part of the New Testament is given over to St. Paul writing to the young churches in countries bordering the Mediterranean as well as writing to some of his newly found and converted friends.

When writing to the young church in Phillippi, he begins his letter by saying: "I thank my God with every remembrance of you." Here, Paul *was telling the people, Remembering and Thanksgiving go together. In fact Paul stressed the importance of being thankful more than once when writing to the young churches of his time. He also had, as the rest of us have, this inborn conviction that we should all remember; and by doing so hold in our memory those precious moments and occasions in our lives.*

We think of people in our past and the part they played in our lives, the love we shared and the fellowship we enjoyed. We are all debtors to someone. We owe more to others than we perhaps realize. Parents certainly, teachers, friends, our own children too, or even a clergyman.

Unfortunately remembering does not always result in thanksgiving. On the contrary, it may evoke very different reactions, as some memories bring pain, others grief, sometimes memories bring shame or sorrow, disappointments too, things we would rather forget. Whilst at the same time it may bring to mind a dedicated team of carers. Among these carers there may well have been surgeons, doctors, nurses, health visitors all, doing their best to ease the suffering of someone we dearly loved and in our hearts perhaps still do.

At times like these, when we remember the past, led by the Holy Spirit, it may well be that we may find ourselves in our parish church seeking quietness and solitude, feeling a need to pray or maybe have the urge to visit a church or chapel specially built and consecrated in memory of a special event or make a pilgrimage to the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire. Then of course, as from today we can add to that list our own New Garden of Remembrance here at St. Mary's. Why not look upon it as an open-air chapel, surrounded by nature, situated not only in a quiet part of the churchyard, but also in a quiet part of the village, adjacent to woodland on the one side, trees, shrubs and other plants on the other. At times there is plenty of wildlife to be seen as well. You hear birds singing all day long, acting as the chapel choir so to speak. An ideal place to come and indulge in personal remembrance.

That is what's so wonderful about memories, is it not, no one can take them away from us.

It so happens, tomorrow morning we shall be interring the first ashes in our Garden of Remembrance with a local family. Ashes of a member of that family who was born in Warsash, then, after marriage, lived and died in a house not very far from where she was born.

There is something else worth keeping in mind, Mother Church remembers too. One of the reasons we are here this morning and every Sunday morning. We remember the historical Jesus and the night He took bread, broke it and gave it to His disciples saying: "Take, eat and do so in remembrance of me." Whenever we here these words our minds go on and think of the bread and wine as a memorial that Jesus was crucified and died so we might live. He put us

right with God. That is why we come together and give thanks to Him as He has shown us death is not the end of life but a new beginning. That is the everlasting Gospel to us. That is the good news we are proclaiming.

I hope you will find comfort in this message when you visit the Garden of Remembrance for some quietness, reflection and prayer. Think with gratitude of someone whom God has called home to be with Him in Eternity.

THANKS BE TO GOD!