

Remembrance Sunday on the Centenary Armistice Day, 2018 BBC C&W Thought for the Day by the Bishop of Coventry

At the eleventh hour on this eleventh day of the eleventh month, one hundred years ago today, the guns of war finally fell silent. Forty million people lay dead or injured across the world. One million of them British. One million Africans died as a result of the war. 140,000 soldiers from the then united India died or were injured. And there were nearly two and half million German military casualties.

Numbers beyond our imagining. But the individuals, especially our relatives of whom we've heard but never knew, will weigh heavily in our hearts this day. I think of my uncle George who died in the trenches – and the sweet heart he left behind. I think of my own grandmother who died following an air raid on London in 1918.

For those of us who live in the peace of Coventry and Warwickshire, we pay special tribute to the many thousands of soldiers, sailors and airmen from city and county, who gave their lives for our peace and freedom, to be followed by so many more in later wars and conflicts.

Perhaps among we can centre our thoughts on one young man born in Day's Lane, Coventry – Private Horace McKnight. He died 100 years ago on this Armistice Day from wounds inflicted in the final advance on Picardy. The last of Coventry's brave soldiers to die in the days of that war to end all wars.

Horace's death, on the brink of peace, calls us to honour his sacrifice with renewed commitment to confront the causes of conflict and defeat what makes for war.

Thirty-two years after Horace died, almost to the day, the city of Coventry burned in a furnace of fury unleashed from the air, and its flames lit the skies of Warwickshire.

But there was a greater fire that burned in those days, the fire of God's love with a power to overcome hate and the death it causes.

Inspired by the story of Jesus Christ, whom the violence of the world killed but whom the more powerful love of God raised from the grave, Coventry triumphed over the terror of war with a commitment to peace and a challenge to enemies everywhere to reconcile and become friends.

On the eleventh day of November 1918 a new day of peace arrived. A century later to the day, conscious of the carnage of the past, we yearn to make peace permanent in the future. The promise of God is that his power of love and forgiveness is the source of our peace and the cause of reconciliation. Let believe that promise, trust in that power and let a new day of peace begin.