

This is Remembrance Day, 2014. The freedom, peace and order we experience in our land stand out brightly as the dear and precious gifts they are, in contrast to the pain and loss of those who've paid the price to keep it secure for us.

This year, 2014, we are called to remember the reality that 100 years ago, in 1914, "The War to end all Wars" began. When Great Britain declared war on Germany, August 4, Canada, under the British Empire, was also at war. The history of Remembrance Day itself began as a result of that war -- lest we forget!-- the terrible tragedy of that war, leading to over 60,000 Canadian troops killed, 170,000 wounded. -- lest we forget! Across the world, this war resulted in 16 million deaths and 20 million wounded.

This year, 2014, adds up to the 75th year since the beginning of World War II, the deadliest military conflict in history. Let us forget, over 60 million people were killed, which was over 2.5% of the world population.

The Korean War, 1950-53, then under Nato, wars in the decade of 1990-2000 included military service with wars in the Persian Gulf, Bosnia, and Kosovo. Canada has focused through recent decades to be a peace-keeping force. Remembrance Day has not been forgotten.

Then war of terror touched North American soil September 11, 2001. With a coalition of nations, from 2001, Canadian forces have served in Afghanistan. Lest we forget, 158 soldiers have been killed and 615 wounded in action in service to our country during this conflict.

Yet it is that today's call to silence and remembrance grips us perhaps more than we anticipated. For the battle front against terror reached our own soil Monday, October 20, when Warrant Officer Patrice Vincent was struck intentionally by a driver. Then again, Wednesday, October 22.

I share this online communication from a young man, John Shields, a close relative on my wife Eva's side of the family. John posted:

"Ottawa was my home for four years while I attended the University of Ottawa. I have many amazing memories and friends from my time in that city. I am sickened to the core by the horrific senseless acts that took place today. So many emotions permeate throughout my soul it is difficult to describe.

"As Canadians we value peace, order and good government. We tend to believe that rational people can find ways to co-exist and get along even when they disagree. Unfortunately, today's events in Ottawa show that some individuals do not have the same respect for life that we do.

"Do not mistake our politeness for weakness; do not mistake our desire for peace for cowardice. When pushed too far, we will push back.

"My thoughts and condolences go out to Cpl. Nathan Frank Cirillo and his family. Your service to this country and your bravery will forever be remembered. To those injured and those who experienced this horrific event first hand, stay strong. Stay strong Ottawa and stay strong Canada." -----

Remembrance Day 2014. We would prefer not to have to experience the loss of pain and death. Nevertheless, it is the pain of these losses of life which serve to call forth renewed vigilance, and renewed purpose to protect law and order in our nation for the sake of freedom. So also do we come to remember--lest we forget!--to recognize and support all who continue to stand up for us, to serve in harm's way on our behalf. Think of those four civilians near the Unknown Soldiers' monument that day who immediately rushed to come to Cpl. Cirillo's side after he was shot. We are a people standing on guard together, "O Canada, we stand on guard for thee."

Let me speak a bit further of "standing on guard." Greater tragedy could have happened that day. I praise God that no greater evil, no further killings took place at our Nation's Capitol! This occurred in the very halls of our Parliament buildings on Ottawa Hill! As a Christian, there is for me yet another calling, to remember this day -- lest we forget! -- to thank the Lord God for His daily provision, His answer to the petitions in the Lord's Prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread," and "Deliver us from evil." He stands on guard for thee, Yes, He stands on guard for each one of us.

Jesus Christ stated, "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends." Lest we forget! "God has so loved this world, that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Jesus Christ suffered, died, and rose again to fulfill this promise. God's love is the unfailing source of forgiveness to bring peace and a truly abiding love that has power to renew life, even beyond death!

Today is Remembrance Day. It is a day set aside for us to celebrate national freedom and honour our veterans. Let's stand on guard for one another, in word and deed. And know also that God in Christ Jesus laid down His life to give you peace and life before God in His presence forever.

Prayer: Gracious God, our Father in heaven, give us true gratitude for the veterans who have served our land. You called them to serve, and they took on that vocation. Pour out Your blessings on them. Strengthen those who suffer from injuries they received, and comfort families whose loved ones have died in service. We also pray that You protect the men and women who now defend our nation against its enemies. We thank You for their service and for all who have served. Grant us all in our vocations and roles in life to serve in ways that bring goodness and blessing to the lives of others. In the name of Jesus, who won the ultimate battle for us on Calvary. Amen.

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