

***The Introduction to the City of Coventry Remembrance Sunday Service at the
War Memorial on 10th November 2013
by the Bishop of Coventry***

Lord Mayor, Lady Mayoress, Deputy Lord Lieutenant, Members of Parliament, Members of the City Council, Distinguished Visitors from our twin cities of Kiel and Dresden, Members of Her Majesty's Armed Forces and other uniformed bodies, People of Coventry: I invite you to prepare for our city's Remembrance Service.

One hundred years ago in 1913 tensions between the nations of Europe were tight. It would take only the assassination of a man and his wife later to plunge the continent into war, the ferocity of which the world had never known before.

This great park was set aside as a permanent memorial to those who had fallen in the war that was thought to end all wars, with each tree planted in memory of a young man who had given his life for his country.

A generation later Europe was once again caught up in a dreadful and destructive conflict that cost the cities of Coventry, Volgograd and Dresden dear, and would engulf much of the world in a terrible conflict.

And so this Memorial Park took on another layer of remembrance. Like the generation of men and women between the wars, its trees had by now grown tall, and upon them was laid the weight of more memories. And the city's book of remembrance (open for us today) had more names of precious loved ones added to it.

We have known peace in Europe since those dark days and enemies have become friends but the world is still torn apart by war. Young men and women of our own armed forces continue to die in Afghanistan as they serve their country and seek to build a safer world free from terror. Our hearts go out especially this day to the families of this city who have had their own hearts torn open by the grief of losing their beloved one in Afghanistan, Irak or any other recent conflict.

And we are mindful that as we gather today in safety and freedom, civil war rages in Syria. Men, women and children are dying as we stand. Others will be fleeing their homes as we return to ours.

Coventry is a city of compassion – a city that remembers well. We remember the horror of the destruction of our city. We remember those who have fiercely fought for our freedom, and honour them. We remember all those of every nation who have suffered in war and those who continue to bear the price of the world's violence.

Coventry is a courageous city that sets its sight on a better world. We dare to call ourselves a city of peace and reconciliation because we have known through our own history that peace is possible, that reconciliation can be a reality and that hope for a world in which all are safe and all are free is worth every sacrifice.

And so we remember this day all who have made the ultimate sacrifice for a better world, and we do so in the presence of God who gave up his own Son for the peace of the world.