

***Veterans Day Memorial Service  
November 9, 2014  
Sermon By: Roy G. Pollina †***

Shortly after our troops entered Saddam Hussein's Iraq, I sat at a dinner table where the motives for that war were being hotly debated. Statements about weapons of mass destruction and lack thereof were thrown about. Was Hussein as bad as Hitler or worse? Would Iraq become a quagmire? Had we learned anything from our experiences in Vietnam?

The table was equally divided on the justification or, at least, the timing of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Finally, one of my dinner companions turned to me in the hope my opinion would tip the scale. "Tell us, Father Roy, are you for the war?" I made the only reply I could with a question of my own. "Do you really want your priest to be for war?"

No better description of conflict can be had than the one given to the Graduating Class of 1879 at Michigan Military Academy by Retired General William Tecumseh Sherman, "I tell you, war is hell!"

In this sinful and broken world, it is the warrior, who hates the war the most, that becomes the guardian of peace. No right thinking person is "for war" especially those called to fight them.

One hundred years ago, the world was engaged in what was, at that time, history's bloodiest conflict. Until the outbreak of World War II, no one expected it was the war that started the tally; the war begun in August 1914 was simply the "Great War." In the Daily News on August 14, 1914, renowned author H. G. Wells wrote:

"This is already the vastest war in history. It is a war not of nations, but of mankind. It is a war to exorcise a world-madness and end an age. For this is not a war for peace. It aims straight at disarmament. It aims at a settlement that shall stop this sort of thing forever. Every soldier who fights against Germany now is a crusader against war. This, the greatest of all war, is not just another war, it is the last war."

The title of Wells' article: *The War to End All Wars.*

If there was ever a reason to be "for war" it would be to fight a war to end all wars. If, as Sherman said, "war is hell," then trench warfare in WWI was the pit of hell.

Into the Maw of the inferno, Christ Episcopal Church sent its “boys.” Carter, Pannill, Lewis, Whittle, Ranson, Fischer, Martin and Rucker. Eleven of our boys willing to leave Martinsville to go “over there” to fight, perhaps to die, to end war.

The Great War ended at the 11<sup>th</sup> hour of the 11<sup>th</sup> day of the 11<sup>th</sup> month of 1918 – Armistice Day. Sadly, its promise to be the war to end war was never to be. In a little over 20 years, we would again send our boys to Europe and to the Pacific to fight in an even fiercer conflict. Then, Korea, - then, Vietnam, - then. Bosnia, - then, Afghanistan, - then, Iraq with numerous hostilities between the major conflicts. With each engagement the “boys” found that they came to depend more and more on the support of “girls” in uniform. Our veterans today are men and women in all branches of service engaged in all levels of duty.

Today, a few days before November 11<sup>th</sup>, Veterans Day, Christ Episcopal Church honors its veterans. We have created a display, a shrine if you will, for a shrine is a place hallowed by its associations. In our shrine are pictures of loved ones who served their countries with honor. We have Americans – Canadians – Poles; veterans who placed themselves in harm’s way to secure freedom and peace for the rest of us. No right thinking person is “for war”. No Christian following our Lord and Savior, the

Prince of Peace, is “for war.” But, for the sake of peace, to oppose oppression, to protect the innocent, those men and women enshrined here today and many more like them have reluctantly taken up arms to vanquish greater evil. The greatest honor we can give our warriors is to work and pray tirelessly for peace. To pray that the “last war” will be exactly that! To work and pray that one day, one day soon, the promise of the ancient prophecy of Isaiah will be fulfilled...

*And it shall come to pass in the latter days, that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established as the highest mountain... and all nations shall flow to it.*

*And he shall judge between the nations, and shall decide for many peoples: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation; neither shall they learn war any more.*

**Amen, Amen**