

## COMMEMORATION OF ANZAC

St Philip's Collingwood April 16 2015

### OTHERHOOD

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These heroes that shed their blood and lost their lives. You are now living in the soil of a friendly country. Therefore, rest in peace. There is no difference between the Johnnies and Mehmetts to us, where they lie side by side in this country of ours...

You, the mothers, who sent their sons from faraway countries, wipe away your tears; your sons are now lying in our bosom and are in peace; after having lost their lives on this land, they have become our sons as well.

These words were written in 1934 a few months before he died by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, first President of Turkey and regarded as the maker of modern and democratic Turkey (he was, by the way, born in the beautiful city of Thessaloniki in Greece).

They are quoted in a recent book by Joshua Funder inspired by his great-grandfather and using his words and stories which the writer heard as well as creating a novelistic context. The book is called Watson's Pier and is the story of Colonel Stanley Watson, DSO, MC and Serbian Order of the White Eagle. He was captain to the signals operation, that vital link between the locations of the troops at Gallipoli and was the second last man to leave there having done his job and cared for his men as well as he could, although with the harrowing experiencing of holding in his arms a young Sapper, called Fitzroy who had been shot causing dreadful facial wounds. Watson eased his way to death.

But that is what it was about in the better moments as well as the worst.

During a recruitment sessions and before those ghastly days, Watson asked each man 'What do you fear?'. Three answers are quoted: battle, mother, and being alone without my mates.

We are fortunate to live in an age very different from that in which I was growing up when we are fully aware of the paralysing fear which gripped some of those who would never have thought of themselves as heroes or brave or courageous; they were there with their mates.

Bravery and courage like loyalty, integrity, mate and love, cannot be tightly defined but they can be seen and felt and their presence proof enough for us.

There may, however, be something which may be a trace element in each.

What is it? Think of a soldier seeing a wounded man trapped in No Man's Land and deciding to ignore the risk of a sniper's bullet and going to help the poor thing because he thinks he could get a Military Cross out of it. The very thought is disgusting, as disgusting as someone who is prepared to kill and maim many and cause his own death for ensured martyrdom.

In martyrdom, courage, bravery, being a mate or loving it is not about self, not even about things like fatherhood, or motherhood, or sisterhood, or brotherhood because in a way each of these is restrictive by definition.

No, it is what I want to call by a word in no dictionary- 'Otherhood': the realisation of the value and worth and dignity of the other because she or he in being the other is part of us in a heart-beating sort of way, in a neighbour sort of way as Jesus taught.

The evidence of this is about us all the time. Think of those who, fortunately successfully, went in search of the missing Luke Shambrook. A matter of days ago Henry Krayevski of Greta was saved as he clung to a tree in dangerous flood waters by someone taking a great risk. The most moving thing I found in the report was when Mr Krayevski said of his rescuer- 'I don't know his name'.

When we think of Gallipoli and our memories are also taken to the horrors of other wars in prison camps and the jungles of New Guinea, we see otherhood writ large and often so tragically, so tragic that many of those who were there would never come to speak of it.

Christians have no ownership of 'whatsoever things are true and honourable, pleasing and commendable' and respect those with whom these are shared in a special way whilst seeing these things which generate otherhood supremely reflected in the life and person of Jesus and through the presence of his Spirit.

The writer of the Letter to the Hebrews, as we have heard, speaks of endurance and confidence and faith which we see in Jesus but which we can see in others.

The Anzac grace for this time and all time to come is not in the blood and the struggle, the acceptance of a task and the perseverance, and not just in the otherhood amongst themselves.

In 1977, Stanley Watson (remember him?), revisited Turkey in his early nineties. During his return to Gallipoli with his supporter from the embassy, he stopped at a tavern for a drink. They were looking at a map of the area. Now Joshua Funder's words recalling what his Grape-Grampa had told him:

The waiter returned and saw the map.

'Anzak?' he asked.

Watson nodded.

'Anzak!' the waiter exclaimed and hurried behind the bar. He returned with two fresh beers, smiling. He patted Watson on the shoulder, apparently checking he was really there, and said, 'Anzak!' again, before running back into the tavern calling in Turkish. He came back out with an old fellow, who sat beside Watson.

Anzak,' he said to the old Turk pointing at Watson. Then he turned to Watson. 'My father, Turkish soldier,' before fetching his old man a beer as well.

The old man and Watson smiled at each other and raised their glasses.

The story goes on with the waiter running across the square to another tavern and brought back what the narrator describes as 'two ancient gentleman' who joined them.

Funder again,

The old chaps sat down across the table, filled their glasses and raised them.

'Anzak,' they said.

The party lasted for hours!

The Anzacs didn't win, the Turks gained their victory with the loss of 87000 men. But through their unconditional sense of the worth of the other, giving and not counting the cost, in suffering and pain with the eyes of a young man on a cross turned to them, they 'beat their swords into ploughshares' and have inspired future generations to learn war no more.

In 1942 Stan Watson's medals were stolen from his car after his attendance at a parade in Adelaide. The Central Army Records office of Australia agreed eventually to supply replacements eight years after Stanley Watson's request. He had to pay for the medals.

