

# Moravians Women's Association

Devotional Paper

November 2016

Come, journey with me

A pilgrimage is in essence about making a journey and we have already explored the idea of life being a journey. A pilgrimage is also about places – special holy destinations that lie at the journey's end. Many of these places have become sacred for individuals and are associated with holy people – with saints or with miraculous healing events or visions.

There is nothing new about a pilgrimage nor is it exclusive to Christianity as it is a key part of many world faiths. The first recorded Christian pilgrimage to Jerusalem was around AD 170. Desert pilgrimages also became popular in those early years when it was felt there was a need to retreat into the desert to escape from the busy world and to pray in peace and quiet. Missionary monks then took up the idea of pilgrimages sometimes letting the Spirit take them wherever it would and other times planning specific destinations like St Cuthbert who first took the gospel to Lindisfarne. Today there are many pilgrimage sites throughout the world and a surprising amount here in Great Britain. One of these is Westminster Abbey which houses two very different sacred sites; the shrine of St Edward the Confessor and the Tomb of the Unknown Warrior. As November is traditionally the month when we remember those who have lost their lives fighting for “king and country” we will focus on the latter.

An unidentified soldier from WW1 is buried at the west end of the nave of the cathedral among the splendid tombs and memorials of many rich and powerful people. The body was brought from France and buried in November 1920 in the presence of King George V, Queen Alexandra, the Queens of Spain and Norway and many other eminent figures of the time. The grave contains soil from France and is covered by a slab of black Belgian marble. It draws attention to the great sacrifice made by so many young men whatever their class or rank. It is a place where visitors can stand quietly and think or pray about the thousands of ordinary men and women lost in conflicts across the world. Sadly there is a need for us still to pray for those fighting and caught up in wars today. This poem is based on the Tomb of the Unknown Warrior.

1. Voices, footsteps heard each day  
Some don't look; they just pass by  
Clicking cameras, finding tombs  
Glancing at watches, hurrying on

3. Some voices stop and feet stand still  
Upon the polished marble spot  
They think of wars in days gone by  
And fighting that goes on today

2. A ring of poppies marks the spot,  
Their petals red like blood he shed.  
He has no name, but he was brave  
And died that day in France

4. He has no name so we don't know  
Who he was, rich or poor  
Or what he'd say about that day  
He died for king and country.

For Discussion

1. If it is possible arrange a visit to a pilgrimage site near you.
2. Some sisters may have been to Lourdes, Canterbury, Walsingham, Jerusalem or other Holy Sites. If so discuss your experiences.
3. What do you know about pilgrimages in other faiths?