

# From the Pastor

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The armistice (a temporary truce by agreement of opposing sides to stop fighting for a certain time) of Nov. 11, 1918 essentially brought an end to four years of fighting in World War I between Germany and the Allies. It went into effect at 11 a.m. on Nov. 11, 1918, hence the reference to “11-11-11.” The actual end of WWI occurred with the Treaty of Versailles on June 28, 1919.

Armistice Day is also known as Remembrance Day in the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth of Nations. Both days are set aside to honor veterans of WWI. In June 1954, to honor Americans who fought in all wars, the U.S. Congress struck the word “Armistice” from the 1938 Act officially declaring Armistice Day a national holiday and inserted the word “Veterans,” creating Veterans Day as we know it.

An understated theme to remember this Veterans Day is that the sacrifices, heroism, camaraderie, pain and loss are not common to one side. Soldiers and their loved ones share the same horror, the same fear, loss, and heartache regardless of who they represent.

I’m reminded by Veterans Day that the fuel of war is revenge, again common to both sides and motivated by carnage and personal loss regardless of initial rationale for the conflict’s origin. When someone near and dear to you gets injured revenge is always nearby.

We all know someone affected by war, whether physically, emotionally or morally. This Veterans Day I’ll remember those I know suffered from war, including those brothers and sisters I don’t know. Including also those called “enemy” because when the truth about “why” is finally revealed to be very different than that portrayed — it wounds everyone again.

I recall my dear friend who was a Vietnam era Army medic. He told me recently that since serving, history and his own awakening about the twisted truth relating to the Vietnam War has lent to a particular focus on the recent Ken Burns-Lynn Novick series, “The Vietnam War.” Though it did well by including reflections from soldiers on each side it fell far short on “big picture” themes, like why they were there in the first place. He learned to despise war and its architects as most are based on deception or outright lies that he typically learn decades later, if at all.

There are historians and social scientists with much more insight about war and militarism than we’ll ever know. This Veterans Day let’s pursue clarity and explanation for our country’s occupation with war throughout its long history of wars. After all, in our 241-year history the U.S. has been at war every year but 22 years! We all should be curious why this is our truth.

*+ Father Roger*