REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY: 2026

Woodbridge does Remembrance well! This is the only town I know that has its own separate, Children's Remembrance too, and last Friday we had the Lord Lieutenant and our MP here either side of our resplendent Town Mayor! Over the last 6 years, I have been privileged to stand here at the heart of Market Hill to lead such a wonderfully organised annual occasion. So my particular thanks to our British Legion, for the support of the staff at Shire Hall, and to our very own 'Rock Barracks' who know a thing or two about the 'rumour of wars' and the huge part they play for our safety and protection, nationally and internationally.

"At the going down of the sun and in the morning, we will remember them." These words which have come to be known as the **'Ode of Remembrance'**, came from a poem by Laurence Binyon written not at the end of the 1st World War but right at the beginning. It was published in *The Times* in September 1914. It was written as a patriotic but sobering response to the loss of life suffered by the British Expeditionary Force at the First Battle of Mons in the previous month. These words grew with increasingly painful relevance as the war progressed and remain a vehicle to remember the terrible loss of life not just in the Great War but in all subsequent conflicts.

And then there is, perhaps, a lesser-known poem by the inspired and angry Siegfried Sassoon who famously won the military cross for reckless bravery in the face of danger (which

earned him the frontline nickname “Mad Jack”) and yet, and yet, you may not know that this brief poem, called, **‘Everyone Sang’** was written in 1919 after the end of that brutal war expressing the excitement and the terror all mixed up together. It also invites our continuing hope and prayer for peace on earth – which should silently grow, grow, and grow:

“Everyone suddenly burst out singing; and I was filled with such delight as prisoned birds must find in freedom winging wildly across the white Orchards and dark-green fields; on; on; and out of sight.

Everyone’s voice was suddenly lifted, and beauty came like the setting sun. My heart was shaken with tears; and horror drifted away…O but every one was a bird; and the song was wordless; the singing will never be done.”

Dear sisters and brothers that would be my poem of choice for our today and tomorrow - not as a priest, but as a child of God, like you. Every hair of our head is counted and we are chosen, called by name, precious to Him in life and in death.

Of course I regret that I was brought up and **told** to believe, this would mark an end to another war in Europe. We now know sadly, the opposite is true. From time to time, I proudly ask for the flag of Ukraine to rise up from our tower of St Mary’s; I could do the same for other countries whose freedom has been abused or destroyed, but I would be accused of being ‘too political’…

What Binyon and Sassoon would both agree on is that: it is the world of politics itself, and politicians in particular, who

create all this bitterness, sadness and mourning. The Christian and Easter response is to pray that all today's victims and prisoners of war are finally set free: to enjoy those white orchards instead of muddy trenches, to rediscover their wings of flight and freedom -at the going down of the sun and in the morning - whenever and wherever, a new dawn breaks through, and heaven touches earth.

In the name…

AMEN.