

Remembrance '24

My thanks to the Revd Captain, my colleague in faith at Rock Barracks – for reminding us all of perhaps Jesus' most famous Gospel teaching: 'The Beatitudes'.

They were spoken from a mountain and it is perhaps a romantic thought? If those words which have echoed down through the centuries had been fully understood and honoured, there would be no war or terror in the world.

But alas, there is no place for romance - not even for the likes of that most famous of war poets, Siegfried Sassoon - who not only survived World War 1, and received the Military Cross, but who also continued to explore and define his wish and 'literary campaign':

For a world without dictators, without cruelty and violence and waste of human life, and most of all to see jingoism of any kind as a curse and as a lie. I am not sure what this great poet would make of the power of social media in our own day. Doesn't it distort our world view and distort the vision and dream of any kind of blessedness, kindness, or search for truth?

The danger is the same and pressing, what we now call 'fake news'.

I remember not so many years ago, don't you, when a drone was a new kind of photographic and technological invention? I grabbed the opportunity when the Head of the Primary School in my last Parish, asked me if we could get all the children to 'hug the Church' on our special Feast day of St Dunstan in May. It was a fantastic picture and the operator of that drone even let me had a go afterwards...and it was all such good fun. I had no idea then that the drone would become a military option, and such a precise one as we have witnessed on our TV screens recently in Ukraine, Gaza and Lebanon. And, please, I am not making a political point here but a very human one. If families and children only have the option of finding safety or

sanctuary in a school or hospital, it is surely breaking every international law to destroy that hospital or school. And for us, as onlookers, it is heart-breaking.

Our local, and brave Parachute Regiment from Rock Barracks know there is no place for romanticism; they are certainly not trained to be poets! And they have to live continually worrying where they may be called to go out and reach, to help, to rescue...they deserve our greatest respect for living out that precarious line of duty and, on our behalf – to keep us safe, to protect us all from any kind of terrorism or despair.

And that's why we rightly gather here today for another Remembrance Sunday. Those young lads who had little choice but to fight, rather than surrender; those young lads who had little choice but to give their utmost by land, sea, and air to stop that historic tyranny – which every dictatorship is. We still pray for their souls.

Like Siegfried Sassoon, my own grandad was fortunate to survive the 1st World War also. I asked him when I was very young why he had no hair and he just smiled. He never spoke to me about war at all. It was my Dad who said that he lost all his hair because of mustard gas in the trenches.

So let's give special thanks for those who did lose their lives in 2 World Wars, especially those who lived here in Woodbridge, and who gave us the opportunity to cherish new choices for peace and freedom. We must never forget them.

We must never forget either, the great and lasting truth of Jesus' Beatitudes:

“Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

God bless you, and keep you, safe in His love. Amen.