

REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY

I wonder how many of you have seen that great film with Michael Caine and Glenda Jackson, 'The Great Escaper'? Hands up!

It is a beautiful love story, of course. But most of all it is about remembering his best friend in the navy all those years ago, and still feeling guilty about his death. On the 75th Anniversary of the D – Day Landings, he had to return that tin box which he had kept faithfully all these years and place it on his grave. When he finally arrived at the beautiful cemetery in Bayeux he looked all around him, at line upon line of white gravestones, and just said three words: 'What a waste.'

Another touching moment was when he saw some German veterans on the ship travelling over. After his initial (hard) reaction, 'What are they doing here?' and pointing as he said it...he then reflected, listened, and realised that they were just like him - ordinary, brave, compassionate – and they all stood up silently and saluted one another.

We gather in Market Hill to remember and give thanks for those soldiers in 2 World Wars from their home town of Woodbridge, who died so bravely in the tragedy of war. They may not have escaped that final sacrifice, as Michael Caine's character had, but in Christian understanding, they have moved on to the peace of Paradise, where there is no more sorrow but only life eternal.

Our hearts and thoughts also go out today to those victims of ongoing conflicts, especially in Gaza, Ukraine, Yemen and Afghanistan. Wherever people's freedoms are denied or destroyed, and wherever innocent children's lives are cut short, we must pray for peace in the world, and **every** day.

Thank you to my colleagues in the Town Hall and the local British Legion who have again provided us with such a memorable and solemn weekend of remembering; to our local Parachute Engineer Regiment and their families who live with the dangers of being called up for combat at any given time; to our army, air and sea cadets learning to protect and guard us, thank you!

Remember today the gift and importance of individual friendships and loyalty, each to the other, and that the gift of life itself is precious. There is too much cruelty and division in our world instead of peace and mercy. The Beatitudes we have heard again in the Gospel just now, are surely the best manifesto and pledge to keep war at bay and honour the common good; hallow and bless us, we pray, to the One who happily made us and abides with us, until we, in God's time, 'knock on heaven's door', and enter in.

In the name of the Father...

Amen.