REMEMBRANCE 2025

Can I begin by thanking the British Legion, Woodbridge Council and Rock Barracks for their customary attention to detail to mark this weekend of Remembrance so faithfully and well? It is a great tribute to this town that so many different organizations and groups can come together in this way. And a very special welcome to the 90 Ghurkhas' and their families who have fled Kent to join us in their new military home with the Parachute Regiment, here in Suffolk.

Together, we remember what can never be forgotten: the sacrifice of those 189 Woodbridge lives lost in two World Wars but also the continuing tragedy and cost of all war.

We have been flying the flag of Ukraine from the Tower of St Mary's for nearly four years as an act of solidarity, a pledge if you will, that everyone deserves their own homeland, and freedom to live in peace. And in a more private way, we have been saying our own prayers, lighting our own candles, asking the Lord of all Creation to let the light of peace overcome the terror of darkness and oppression…for the Cross of dereliction to give way to: the springtime of welcome, new, Resurrection life, where alleluias ring!

Of course, if you believe that death has the last word, that when we die, that's it, everything is snuffed out, the Gospel we have heard today is sadly irrelevant or rejected. In every Church though, of every tradition, we see a crucifix and are reminded of Christ's hands stretched out, and his side where blood flowed. We remember his sacrifice but more than that,

we remember that it was not in vain. On Easter Eve we recall Christ's returning to his closest disciples and not mentioning those harrowing days of His Passion or the kangaroo court engineered by Pilate. He just slips in by their side offering words of peace, reassuring them that Easter is a promise for everyone who trusts in him, everyone who says that the new life of heaven is not a fantasy; it is instead, our final coming home - where there are no more trenches, or drones, or bombs but instead, eternal rest.

Our prayers for all who died on land, or sea or sky are prayers for a gentle, heartfelt 'Requiem'. All our poppies represent the fragility of this life, whilst still holding on to the precious memory of those who fell, who died, and gave us the freedom we enjoy today. Remember, the fallen have nothing more to fear and no more tears to shed.

I believe dear sisters and brothers, that in all our Easters to come, the hope of eternal life should not come as a surprise but as a promise: from Christ himself.

Perhaps this very honest prayer can help overcome our doubts or at least, our nagging sense of unknowing:

"Loving God, though our destination is not yet clear, may we trust in Your graceful promises; though we are uncertain of ourselves, may we be rooted in your loving regard; though our attention is inclined to wander, may we hear the things You are saying; though we often neglect your influence, may we be convicted of Your power to change, in Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen."