

## THOUGHT FOR THE DAY    ARMISTICE DAY    11<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2020

Good morning.

Every community will have its own unique connection with Armistice Day.

Having lived for many years in Liverpool I'm conscious of a special bond between the City and today's national Remembrance.

The idea of making a tomb for an unknown warrior came from an army chaplain, David Railton, who served on the Western Front. While there he saw in a garden a grave with a rough wooden cross on which was pencilled 'unknown British soldier'. Thereafter he felt a duty to honour all fallen warriors. He later became the Rector of Liverpool.

He persuaded the Dean of the Abbey, Herbert Ryle, to share this vision. Ryle was the son of the first Bishop of Liverpool.

When the casket of the unknown soldier was carried into the Abbey, followed by King George V, the guard of honour was made up of one hundred recipients of the Victoria Cross. Missing from their ranks was Noel Chavasse, the only soldier in the Great War to be awarded a double VC. He'd been killed at Passchendaele. He was a son of the second Bishop of Liverpool.

The ceremony in the Abbey followed the unveiling of the Cenotaph by the King. It was created by Edwin Lutyens who went on to design the Metropolitan Cathedral in Liverpool. The work was stopped by the Second World War, but his magnificent Crypt remains and is testament to his ability to touch the soul with stone.

There are no religious symbols on the Cenotaph which will stand in silence today bereft of the descendants of 'the Glorious dead' - which are the only words engraved on the monument.

The stone of the Cenotaph touched the soul of many. Over a million came to claim with flowers their love and their loss.

Those looking for words of faith could find them on the Tomb of the Unknown Warrior, including the acclamation of Jesus 'Greater love hath no man than this'.

These words were also written on the cross of the grave of Noel Chavasse.

His dying words were to ask the nurse to tell his fiancé, "Duty called and called me to obey."

The Remembrance of an unknown warrior one hundred years later might make us all ponder what the call of duty means - in such different times and in such a crisis as is ours today.

The Right Reverend James Jones KBE