

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

Good Morning,

On this Armistice Day it seems trivial to mention Taylor Swift. But she's catapulted to the top of the lexicon a word that narrowly missed the Collins prize as 'Word of the Year': 'Era'.

And 'era' is a word for our times, as we remember especially the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> World Wars. They WERE of ANOTHER era. Not just because of the High-Tec of today's modern warfare, but because our attitudes are so different from a hundred years ago.

At a meeting recently I was asked about how the world has changed. From A to E I offered five indicators.

Authority is no longer accepted as it once was; Beliefs are relative, so we hear not so much about The Truth as 'My truth'; Culture seems concussed with little memory of the past; Dictators appear to deliver greater social cohesion than Democracies; and Eternity no longer holds us to account.

But I wish now that when it came to 'D' I'd chosen the word 'Duty'. Emmanuel Kant reckoned it suggested a human capacity for subjecting ourselves to a universal moral law. It's not about deference but about obeying that law regardless of consequences. But in this era, the demand for rights muffles the call of duty.

One of my predecessors as bishop of Liverpool was Francis Chavasse who lived through the Great War. His son Noel was a doctor and an officer. He was the only soldier in that war to be awarded a Double Victoria Cross.

The King's citation commended him for 'his conspicuous bravery and devotion to duty'. He was motivated by three things: faith, love for his men and that sense of duty.

He was fatally wounded at Passchendaele in 1917. With his head already scarred by shell splinters he kept going back in to no-mans land to tend to and rescue the wounded. He was 32 and engaged to be married. An Oxford Blue and an Olympian with a First Class degree he had everything to live for.

As he was dying, he asked the nurse to get a message to his fiancé, 'Tell her, duty called and called me to obey'.

On this Armistice Day, would that the Remembrance of that word, his last, could sound the bugle on the dawn of a new era, where the demand for our rights would bend the knee to the more noble call of duty.

The Right Reverend Bishop James Jones KBE