

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY 25TH JULY

Good Morning.

There's a fragility to beauty. A flower. The wings of a butterfly. A dancing flame.

A breeze can display its shimmering vulnerability. A storm can destroy it and make mourners of us all.

Fragility belongs not just to the world of nature but also to the realm of ideas. At the weekend Chancellor Angela Merkel spoke about freedom in the wake of yet another mass slaughter. This and the attack in Ansbach last night together with the assaults in Kabul on Saturday, desecrate the beauty of freedom and expose its inherent fragility.

In this centenary year of the Battle of the Somme when we salute the sacrifice of so many we comfort ourselves with the hope that the two World Wars were a battle for freedom. With so much blood spilled and soaked up by the soil we might think that the force for freedom is strong and powerful. But the alphabetical and violent litany in Kabul, London, Munich, Nice, Oslo and Paris shows freedom's vulnerability.

Freedom is both great and weak. An idea that is so powerful that it gives oxygen to originality but at the same time so powerless in the face of evil.

This paradox about freedom is similar to what people of faith have wrestled with for ages – how can the world's great Creator who is supposed to be powerful be also so powerless in the face of evil? That question comes into focus for Christians with the vision of Jesus nailed to a cross. Can this victim of violence really be the eventual victor of good over evil?

Whenever there's a terrorist attack politicians, in the name of freedom, pledge to fight and defeat the evil of terrorism. If I were a politician I'd probably say the same. But there's another way of responding.

We could also say,

“Every act of terror you inflict exposes the truth about freedom and its fragility. But for all its vulnerability, and indeed because of it, we still believe in it. And you depend upon it. For without freedom you would not be able to do your deadly deeds. When you abuse freedom in a storm of violence we will die for it.”

So let the candle flames that mark the names of the fallen and the flowers that grace their graves speak not only of grievous loss but also of freedom's beauty, its fragility and its greatness.

The Right Reverend James Jones