

## **A Thought for Remembrance time**

I John 4:7

Dear friends, [it says in Holy Scripture] let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. (NIV)

Christians are under the command of Christ to love even our enemies. And there are no limits to that command. We cannot make the exercise of power in human affairs, and in human institutions such as the armed forces, a separate sort of activity outside the range of Christ's command. On the other hand, as we can see from the history of the second world war - amongst many, many other examples - for this world is full of evil (and full of people within it who do evil) and we need in the world an ordering restraint. In other words, we need institutions, and the people who serve in them, which are empowered to restrain and to order.

Power and love cannot be mutually exclusive. Love, in order to exercise its proper works, such as charity and forgiveness, must provide for a place in this world in which this can be done. And one way of providing such a place is through a work of judging and punishing. In order to destroy what is against love, love must sometimes be united with power; and not only with power, but with compulsory power.

God's work of love is expressed through human loves in a variety of manners. He does the work of love, by evoking our love through his love; he does the work of love by inspiring our mercy through his mercy; and our forgiveness through his forgiveness. And he does the work of love by giving people the will to act forcefully to restrain evil.

Let us not forget, that in restraining evil with force, people are killed. Some of them have their names inscribed on the memorial in Trumpington, or memorials over the whole world. I know of others who were my close friends. So do many of you. Let us give thanks to God that we live in a place and a time in which love can exercise its work. Let us thank God, too, for these people. And give to God the glory that out of the evil that is war - and war most certainly is evil, let us not kid ourselves on that score - out of the evil that is war God has the strength, and the love, to bring great good. And new life.

May God direct this nation, and every nation, in the ways of justice and peace; that people may honour one another, and seek the common good.

**Amen.**