



Speaking in the House of Lords this morning about the attack in Westminster yesterday, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, said:

“My Lords, I want to associate myself with the thanks and tributes paid today, especially for our prayers and thoughts for PC Keith Palmer and for his family. Also, to acknowledge the work of so many members of the public who pitched in and did what they needed to do, when faced with things for which they had never been trained or prepared.

“Yesterday afternoon, one of our own security staff at Lambeth Palace, a Muslim, arrived at the gate having been missed by the vehicle very narrowly, and spent time helping those who had been injured. It was typical of this community and this country that he refused to go home until the end of his shift, and simply spent the time doing his job as he expected.

“This has been typical of so many in this city – the emergency services who contained the incident within six minutes; the staff at this extraordinary place, who give so much of themselves on normal occasions, and extraordinary occasions.

“But I think on our hearts especially today are those who wait at bedsides, who are suddenly caught up in things for which they could never have been prepared or which they never expected and our prayers continue for them on this day.

“Much shock has been experienced, but we know that in the reactions we saw yesterday, that we have the strength to persevere through it. We will talk more generally about that later.”

Responding to the Prime Minister’s statement, the Archbishop said:

“My Lords, I’d like to add welcome of these benches to the statement from the Prime Minister, which quite rightly, as the Noble Baroness, the Leader of the Opposition said, set the tone and spoke for this country.

“I’d also like to convey to the House messages I’ve received through the night from faith leaders around the world, of sympathy and support, and from faith leaders across this country, who want the House and Parliament, and particularly its staff and those who have suffered to know how much those people are in their hearts and minds.

“But I want in terms of values, to refer to something that seems to me to go deeper, to something that is really at the foundation of our own understanding of what our society is about, and to do that in three very simple, very brief pictures.

“The first is of a vehicle being driven across Westminster Bridge by someone who had a perverted, nihilistic, despairing view of objectives of what life is about, of what society is about, that could only be fulfilled by death and destruction.

“The second is of that same person a few minutes later, on a stretcher or on the ground, being treated by the very people he had sought to kill.

“The third is of these two Houses, where profound disagreement, bitter disagreement, angry disagreement is dealt with not with violence, not with despair, not with cruelty, but with discussion, with reason and with calmness.

“My Lords, it seems to me that those three pictures point us to deep values within our own society – deeper even than ones that have been mentioned, quite rightly, in the Prime Minister’s statement and in other statements – which is the sense that comes from (and you would expect this from these benches) a narrative that is within our society for almost 2000 years.

“That speaks of – at this time of year as we look forward to Holy Week and Easter – of a God who stands with the suffering, and brings justice, and whose resurrection has given to believer and unbeliever the sense that where we do what is right; where we behave properly; where that generosity and extraordinary sense of duty that leads people to treat a terrorist is shown; where that bravery of someone like PC Keith Palmer is demonstrated, that there is a victory for what is right and good; over what is evil, despairing and bad.

“That was shown yesterday. That is shown not just in our expression of values, but in our practices which define those values. And that is the mood that we must show in the future.”

4 min read

Source URL: <https://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/london-attack-archbishop-canterbury-responds-house-lords>