



Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

(Philippians 4:4-9)

During the meetings of the two Houses, we have indeed looked at and thought about is true, what is honourable, what is just, pure, pleasing, commendable and excellent. We have found it summed up in a life, and that life has been worthy of praise. We've heard of a life which took literally the reading that we heard first: to be liberal and ungrudging in giving. In giving of time and effort and energy, of life itself; that was both handed to the poor and needy neighbour not only in our own land, but around the world.

In this service, and in all our hearts in the last four days, we have called out of the deep, out of the face of darkness and anger and despair and anxiety. We have called for help.

St Paul, writing to the Philippians – a place of struggle and poverty – tells them that when there is the call for help, God is the one who brings peace. It is even possible in bereavement that peace does come: through the love of neighbour and friend and family and, in this case, around the world.

There will be many here who have worried. Those who will go to their surgeries and worry their friends and families. There are the worries, the anxieties, the deep concerns, around our nation – from different views, but anxieties about its future.

And there are the deep and profound anxieties that are lived out daily by those to whom Jo went in Syria, in Darfur and in so many other places, and where she gave her love, as well as in her own constituency.

The promise is that when all is in the hands of God, our deepest anxieties – even our anxieties about the future of our nation, about its stability and about all that makes it what it has been – even those are overcome by the peace of God, which dispels anxiety, brings hope and enables us above all, at the end of all things, to draw together in the confidence that not only our lives but our history is in the hand of God. That not only our joys – the joy of the life that gave joy – but also our sorrows at their lowest are kept and held by God, who will bless us and bless you; who will bless each life in this nation as we turn to him in our need.

May God’s blessing rest upon us. Amen.

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