



**LANCASTER  
PRIORY**



**HOLOCAUST  
MEMORIAL  
DAY 27/1**

# **The Fragility of Freedom**

28 January 2024, 18.30

Since 2001, the Government has invited British society to observe the 27<sup>th</sup> of January each year as Holocaust Memorial Day. 27 January is the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz by Soviet troops. Holocaust Memorial Day is intended to provide an opportunity for reflection on issues raised by all atrocities, especially those events officially designated as genocides.

The mass murder of millions of people of different ethnic, cultural, religious and political groups in more than one genocide provided the darkest side of twentieth century human history. While the remit of the day is wide-reaching, its focus remains the Holocaust. Although many others perished as a result of Nazi actions, Holocaust Memorial Day provides an opportunity to especially reflect on the fate of European Jewry, for whom Hitler and others held a particular hatred. Christians have also been among the perpetrators of genocide, as well as among the bystanders, and indeed the victims.

Holocaust Memorial Day can give us cause to remember the reality that evil is still powerful in our world. It can strengthen our resolve to protect every community from discrimination, intimidation and violence.

This year Holocaust Memorial Day is based around the theme of 'Fragility of Freedom'. Freedom means different things to different people. What is clear is that in every genocide that has taken place, those who are targeted for persecution have had their freedom restricted and removed, before many of them are murdered. This is often a subtle, slow process. The ten stages of genocide, as identified by Professor Gregory Stanton, demonstrate that genocide never just happens. There is always a set of circumstances which occur, or which are created, to build the climate in which genocide can take place and in which perpetrator regimes can remove the freedoms of those they are targeting. Not only do perpetrator regimes erode the freedom of the people they are targeting, demonstrating how fragile freedom is, they also restrict the freedoms of others around them, to prevent people from challenging the regime. Despite this, in every genocide there are those who risk their own freedom to help others, to preserve others' freedom or to stand up to the regime. HMD 2024 marks the 30th anniversary of the genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda. 49 years after the Holocaust ended, 19 years after the genocide in Cambodia, the world stood by as Hutu extremists shattered the fragile freedom in Rwanda, following decades of tension.

## Welcome and Introduction

*We stand as the choir and ministers enter as the organ plays.*

*The Reverend Leah Vasey-Saunders, Vicar of Lancaster welcomes the congregation informally.*

*The Vicar continues*

## Opening prayers

*These responses are based on the Jewish blessing on hearing bad news. Please join in with the text in bold print here and throughout the rest of this service.*

We gather to remember what many of us have never experienced or seen. But we have heard that millions were torn from home, removed from all that was familiar, and relocated with an orchestrated cruelty that stretches the mind. We have seen the evidence. We have heard the witness. Today, we remember, and share the silence of remembering together. We who dwell in security cannot imagine the horror of being uprooted in uncertainty. We who enjoy comfort cannot comprehend the depths of pain.

We who seek to know still struggle to understand how it came to be: that humanity could become so inhuman. Millions of Jews and others were torn from their home, uprooted. But they will not be torn from our memory. Today, they have a home in the silence of our shared remembering.

*Silence.*

Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation.

**Through your goodness we have this time  
to gather to learn the truth of ourselves.**

We cannot always feel joy for this life.

**We know too much of lives that have been broken.**

Give us courage when we hear tragedy, despair and death.

**To bless you, the one true Judge. Amen.**

## **Hymn** (NEH 320i)

When words are spent and grief destroys compassion,  
or fear of war throws shadows like a cross,  
God melt our hearts and fire imagination,  
that we might sense the pain within each loss.

This loss can blind our eyes and freeze our feeling,  
can numb for us the pain of holocaust,  
for memory fades, to leave just words revealing  
a horror far beyond all human cost.

God open in our present generation,  
a depth of human empathy to feel  
humanity that bridges every nation,  
that only love and hope and grace can seal.

Words by Andrew Pratt 10-1-23 © 2023 Stainer & Bell Ltd, London

## **Freedom Eroded**

A extract from the diary of *Anne Frank*

*After the arrival of the Germans in the Netherlands, Anne and her family went into hiding, but they were betrayed and Anne died in Bergen-Belsen Concentration Camp, just three months short of her 16th birthday.*

‘That is when the trouble started for the Jews. Our freedom was severely restricted by a series of anti-Jewish decrees: Jews were required to wear a yellow star; Jews were required to turn in their bicycles; Jews were forbidden to use trams; Jews were forbidden to ride in cars, even their own; Jews were required to do their shopping between 3.00 and 5.00p.m.; Jews were required to frequent only Jewish-owned barbershops and beauty salons; Jews were forbidden to be out on the streets between 8.00 p.m. and 6.00 a.m.; Jews were forbidden to go to theatres, cinemas or any other forms of entertainments; Jews were forbidden to use swimming pools, tennis courts, hockey fields or any other athletic fields; Jews were forbidden to go rowing; Jews were forbidden to take part in any athletic activity in public; Jews were forbidden to sit in their gardens or those of their friends after 8.00 p.m.; Jews were forbidden to visit Christians in their homes; Jews were required to attend Jewish schools, etc. You couldn’t do this and you couldn’t do that, but life went on’.

## Testimony

Rwanda *Eric Murangwa Eugène Mbe*

Eric was born to a Tutsi family in the eastern Rwandan city of Rwamagana in 1975, the eldest of six. During his formative years he developed a passion for football. His talent was quickly noticed and Toto, as he became to be known, grew to become one of Rayon Sports' best loved players – a fact that would later save his life. When the plane carrying the President of Rwanda was shot down on 6 April 1994, the Hutu government blamed it on Tutsi rebels, sparking the 100-day genocide in which over 800,000 people were killed. Eric was woken in the early hours of 7 April to the din of a city embroiled in fighting. Radio broadcasts demanded people stay in their homes while soldiers crashed down their front doors to find those they deemed 'responsible'. Eric was among those whose houses were raided, and only able to save his life by pulling out an old photo album to prove he was a player for Rayon Sports.

Deciding he was no longer safe at home, he fled to his Hutu teammate's house. While players at many other football clubs throughout Rwanda were killing each other, those at Rayon Sports remained united throughout the genocide. After a week hiding there he was told by his teammate that the killers were coming for him, and took the risky step of seeking shelter with one of the board members of the club, Jean-Marie Vianney Mudahinyuka, otherwise known as Zuzu, a notorious militia leader, and a man subsequently imprisoned for his role in the genocide. Zuzu, a person who tortured, raped and murdered many Tutsis, became Eric's saviour not once, but twice, because his passion was Rayon Sports. Eventually even this became too risky. Escorted in Zuzu's vehicle, with two armed guards brandishing their rifles out of the open windows, Eric was safely taken through the road blocks to the Red Cross HQ in a largely deserted area of Kigali. He was one of those taken within the confines of Hôtel des Mille Collines where more than 1,200 took refuge during the genocide – a story famously retold in the 2004 film *Hotel Rwanda*. Although Eric lost 35 relatives in total, most of his immediate family had survived.

Finally, an opportunity presented itself to escape when the Rwanda football team played in Tunisia. Instead of returning on the flight

home, Eric stayed behind. Later he immigrated to Belgium and then finally to the UK in 1997. The move meant he had to sacrifice his greatest love – his footballing career. Yet, his passion and gratitude for the sport has remained steadfast. Football saved his life. It transcended ethnic differences and ultimately gave him hope for the future. It is this faith in the game that led Eric to establishing the organisation Football for Hope, Peace and Unity. It uses football as a tool to promote tolerance, unity and reconciliation among Rwandan youth in order to prevent tragedies like the 1994 genocide from occurring again in the future.

### **Choir Anthem** I will Lift up mine eyes *Walker*

I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills  
From whence cometh my help  
My help cometh from the Lord  
Which made heaven and earth  
He will not suffer thy foot to be moved:  
He that keepeth thee will not slumber  
Behold, he that keepeth Israel  
Shall neither slumber nor sleep  
The Lord is thy keeper:  
The Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand  
The sun shall not smite thee by day  
Nor the moon by night  
The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil:  
He shall preserve thy soul  
The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in  
From this time forth, and even for evermore

### **Poem** Refugee Blues *W H Auden*

*W H Auden (1907-1973) was one of the greatest English language poets of the twentieth century. 'Refugee Blues' was written in New York in March 1939 and addresses the fate of Jewish refugees from Germany.*

Say this city has ten million souls,  
Some are living in mansions, some are living in holes:  
Yet there's no place for us, my dear, yet there's no place for us.  
Once we had a country and we thought it fair,  
Look in the atlas and you'll find it there:  
We cannot go there now, my dear, we cannot go there now.  
In the village churchyard there grows an old yew,  
Every spring it blossoms anew:  
Old passports can't do that, my dear, old passports can't do that.  
The consul banged the table and said,  
'If you've got no passport you're officially dead':  
But we are still alive, my dear, but we are still alive.  
Went to a committee; they offered me a chair;  
Asked me politely to return next year:  
But where shall we go to-day, my dear, but where shall we go to-day?  
Came to a public meeting; the speaker got up and said;  
'If we let them in, they will steal our daily bread':  
He was talking of you and me, my dear, he was talking of you and me.  
Thought I heard the thunder rumbling in the sky;  
It was Hitler over Europe, saying, 'They must die':  
O we were in his mind, my dear, O we were in his mind.  
Saw a poodle in a jacket fastened with a pin,  
Saw a door opened and a cat let in:  
But they weren't German Jews, my dear, but they weren't German Jews.  
Went down the harbour and stood upon the quay,  
Saw the fish swimming as if they were free:  
Only ten feet away, my dear, only ten feet away.  
Walked through a wood, saw the birds in the trees;  
They had no politicians and sang at their ease:  
They weren't the human race, my dear, they weren't the human race.  
Dreamed I saw a building with a thousand floors,  
A thousand windows and a thousand doors:  
Not one of them was ours, my dear, not one of them was ours.

Stood on a great plain in the falling snow;  
Ten thousand soldiers marched to and fro:  
Looking for you and me, my dear, looking for you and me.

### **Choir Anthem** Psalm 23 *Goodall*

The Lord is my shepherd  
I shall not want  
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures  
He leadeth me beside the still waters  
  
Yea, though I walk  
Through the valley  
Of the shadow of death  
I will fear no evil  
  
For You are with me  
You will comfort me  
You are with me  
You will comfort me

### **Scripture Reading** Isaiah 61:1-3

A reading from the prophet Isaiah.

The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion— to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor.

Thanks be to God.



## Prayers of Intercession

God of all, we bring to you our prayers for the world and its peoples.

Lord of forgiveness and mercy, as we have been reminded of the pain, suffering and loss of life cause to humanity by humanity itself, we pray for the sins which we ourselves have committed and for sins of omission, for the hurt we have caused you and our neighbours through ignorance or indifference, for failure to see your image in someone who is different, for putting our own welfare and social comfort above the basic needs of others and for our reluctance to get involved. We pray that you will mercifully grant us your forgiveness and that you will transform us to reflect your love and mercy to others.

*A candle is lit.*

Lord of all time, we are confronted by the staggering depth of history's legacy. Memories haunt us of lives broken and hopes destroyed. We pray that you will comfort those who are held back by their experiences, strengthen those who fear the future, guide the search for life when all else seems lost.

*A candle is lit.*

Lord of everywhere, we pray for people across our world who suffer today through poverty, hunger, disease, war, and genocide. We remember together today, those killed and affected by the Genocide of indigenous peoples, the Soviet genocide, the Nazi Holocaust and genocide, the genocides of the Cold War and Contemporary genocides of Rwanda, Bosnia, Srebrenica and Darfur. We pray for peace and reconciliation so that even in the most hopeless of situations, the cries of the suffering may be heard.

*A candle is lit.*

Lord of choice and action, we pray for the decision-makers of our world. Guide those who have authority to make change happen. We pray that the common good will empower individuals and transform divided communities.

*A candle is lit.*

Lord of memory and hope, we thank you for the testimonies of those who experienced this history, who witnessed suffering and who champion the causes of freedom and justice today. We pray that their lives may be an inspiration to us so that we may never forget history and work to challenge injustice wherever it may be found.

*A candle is lit.*

Finally, Lord of every human experience, sometimes words are too little to describe the confusion of loss, the pain of suffering or the despair of the unknown.

So let us sit in silence now to offer the prayers of our hearts.

*Silence is kept.*

### **World Prayer for Peace** *We pray together*

O God, Lead us from death to life,  
from falsehood to truth, from despair to hope,  
from fear to trust, from hate to love, from war to peace,  
Let peace fill our hearts, our world and our universe.

Amen.

*We stand.*

### **Prayer for the Victims of the Nazi Holocaust** El Male Rachamim

*A representative of the Jewish Community lights a final candle and leads us in prayer.*

*El Male Rachamim (God full of compassion) is a Jewish prayer for the departed that is recited at funeral services, on visiting the graves of relatives (especially during the holy month of Elul), and after having been called up to the reading of the Torah on the anniversary of the death of a close relative. The prayer originated in the Jewish communities of Western and Eastern Europe and since the end of the Holocaust, the prayer has been adapted as a memorial prayer for the victims of the Holocaust and Nazi persecution. This prayer is typically said or sung in Hebrew and is translated here.*

God full of compassion whose presence is over us all grant perfect shelter of Your presence to the six million souls whom we mourn today, who have gone to their everlasting home from Treblinka, Bergen-Belsen, Dachau and Aushwitz. Master of mercy, cover them in the shelter of Your wings forever and bind their souls into the gathering of life. It is the Lord who is their heritage. May they be at peace in their place of rest. **Amen.**

*Silence is kept.*

### **Hymn** (NEH 5)

God! When human bonds are broken  
and we lack the love or skill  
to restore the hope of healing,  
give us grace and make us still.

You in us are bruised and broken:  
hear us as we seek release  
from the pain of earlier living;  
set us free and grant us peace.

Send us, God of new beginnings,  
humbly hopeful into life;  
use us as a means of blessing:  
make us stronger, give us faith.

Give us faith to be more faithful,  
give us hope to be more true,  
give us love to go on learning:  
God! Encourage and renew!

Fred Kaan, Words © 1989 Hope Publishing Company

## **The Benediction**

As we go from this house of prayer  
into a world of challenge and change  
**we remember the pain of the past.**

As we obey God's commandments  
**we recognise life's need for love.**

As we seek the truth and glimpse God in all people and in all places  
**we go to make the world a home for everyone.**

**Amen.**

*We sit.*

## **Poem** Colours *Michaella Rugwizangoga*

*This poem is dedicated to all survivors of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda.*

Red, Blue, Yellow,  
Green, White, Purple,  
Jasmin, Orange, Azure,  
Old pallors  
Make way for new homes  
A future spread with colours  
A horizon without sorrow  
Here ends our pain.  
Here begins life.

## **Organ Voluntary** Prelude on 'By the waters of Babylon' *Bach*

*Thank you to all who have contributed to this event.*