


Anzac Day address

25 April 2011

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Cathedral worship at Christ's College Chapel



ChristChurch Cathedral 

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'Bless 'em all, bless 'em all, the long and the short and the tall,
Bless all the sergeants and WO1s
Bless all the Corporals and their blinkin' sons
'Cos we're saying good bye to them all
As back to their billets they crawl.
You'll get no promotion this side of the ocean
So cheer up my lads, bless 'em all.'

We're here to say just that – Bless 'em all, Yes God, Bless 'em all – all those old mates, friends, colleagues, family from way back, the great grand dad whose medals I saw a youngster wearing this morning. All those we remember today, who have died in war, who have served their country believing that what they did, was for the greater good. Bless 'em all, long, short, tall-friends and foe. Bless all those who live the wounds and the memories of war. Bless all those who are serving our country now in far off places.

Anzac Day. On Saturday I walked with Gay around the perimeter of the red zone once again taking in the enormity of what has happened to our city and its people. Along Worcester Street near Latimer Square there is a make shift shelter obviously put up by some of the Aussie police who were here to help and they have left messages on the wooden supports. Like – 'so pleased to be able to help our brothers and sisters in NZ. Best wishes to all. We love you'; 'It is an honour to be involved to assist our Kiwi mates'; 'Happy to help our Eastern brothers'. One simply said 'feeling sheepish', and then one which said it all 'the Anzac spirit lives on'.

The cross that was at the centre of the dawn parade this morning was fashioned by members of the Australian Urban Search and Rescue teams who worked with our USAR teams around the city in the rescue period after 22 February. They did a great job, and for myself I can only be inspired by the care and gentleness in which they approached their task in the Cathedral where we feared that there had been significant loss of life. A few days before they all went home, I had a call and was asked if they could take some wood from the wreckage of the Cathedral and fashion a bench which they would then like to present to the city and Cathedral. It is part of a consecrated building so I was glad they were conscious of the need to ask and not just take it. The mayor and I went to the ceremony where we farewelled them, and were presented with the bench which is in Latimer Square now

and will in due course be placed in the grounds of the Cathedral. I was also presented with this cross of Kauri from the Cathedral, set into a piece of one of the matai beams from the roof. It was a most moving gesture, in fact we all got a bit emotional as we acknowledged the close bonds of enduring friendship between our two nations in times of war and natural disaster [and especially when the All Blacks beat the Wallabies!]. The standing ovation we gave all the USAR teams, firemen and police, all the emergency services at the National Memorial Service last month came from a deep and heartfelt emotion of thanks for courage and commitment to a dangerous task. What better symbol could we have as the focus of this Anzac Day this year in our city then than this cross? When times are tough, we will be there for each other.

Gallipoli has become a defining moment in our two nations' history. Anzac Day draws more and more people who have a sense that this day is reflecting something very deep about who we are as a people, what we stand for, and what are our aspirations as a nation. We lament all those who have died and been maimed in war over the years, we pray for those of our defence forces who are working in very dangerous places around the world today, and we recommit ourselves to work for peace with justice in our nation and in our world and in our communities.

Some of you will know that as a priest in Britain, I was the padre for the Burma Star Association, whose ode continues to challenge and inspire me: 'When you go home, tell them of us and say, for your tomorrow we gave our today'.

On Anzac Day it is good for us all to ask ourselves what are we doing with the today that has been gifted to us through the sacrifice of men and women who fought for the principle and values that we hold dear. How are we honouring their sacrifice in the way in which we are living our own lives and managing the affairs of the world?

I am proud to be a member of a nation which places vision, principles and values at the heart of what we do. We may be small but we are a significant force for good in the world. And we will continue to honour those who have died and those who serve in our defence forces by holding to our principles of working within and alongside the international community.

The Anzac spirit is the same as the Canterbury spirit. It is the human spirit that in the worst of times brings out the best in people. Care, compassion, courage and community – a community that respects the integrity of all people, where the weak are protected and none go hungry or poor, a community that seeks to share the blessings and benefits of life, that honours the good earth of which we are part, which strives for peace built on justice, and justice guided by love.

Whether we could put it into words or not, I believe that's the spirit that was alive when the Aussie and the Kiwi USAR teams worked together and paused to farewell each other. That's the spirit that we celebrated at the National Memorial Service, and that is the spirit that we take from today as we move on the journey ahead of us. That's the spirit that brings us here today.

Yesterday was Easter Sunday. For those of us who are Christians we celebrated the fact the life is stronger than death and love is stronger than hate. Against all the odds and in the face of the most profound darkness of pain and sorrow, of hurt and injustice, we will not give up, for love will not be denied. We believe that God who is love, is alive and active in our lives striving with us and working with us for love and life. God is the source of the spirit which inspires us in these dark days. And there is no doubt in my mind that we can build our future on the hope and determination that all that separates and injures and destroys is overcome by all the unites and heals and creates. This is the meaning of Easter.

And so we look to our future with a determination to build communities that are worthy of those who gave their lives and those who continue to defend the principles which are at the heart of being fully alive and human. When you go home tell them of us and say, for your tomorrow we gave our today.

Bless 'em all. Bless 'em all. And bless us as we remind ourselves this day of the challenges and the opportunities and the spirit which has inspired our nations over many years, and is doing so today.