# Memorial Crew Lancaster - Papendrecht (21 July 2024)

Mark Hafkenscheid – St. Mary’s Anglican and Episcopal Church, Rotterdam

Good afternoon, families, friends, people from Papendrecht, distinguished guests,

"Never was so much owed by so many, to so few."

British Prime Minister Winston Churchill spoke these famous words during World War 2 in the House of Commons. He expressed his gratitude for the efforts of the pilots, the bomber crews and others, who were risking their lives in the air.

Never was so much owed by so many, to so few.

That is why we have come together today, in this solemn hour of remembrance, to reflect upon the tragic loss of the crew of the Lancaster who fought in war-torn Europe.

Their Lancaster embarked on a mission that would prove to be its last. And the town of Papendrecht became a final resting place for these men aboard the aircraft, that was referred to as 'Popeye'.

Their names are forever remembered here, in this Lancaster monument. A monument erected in memory of the sacrifice of five British and two Australian men, who died this date, the 21st of July, eighty years ago, when the occupying forces shot their bomber.

This monument is a reminder of the cost of freedom, the freedom we hold dear; the sacrifice of seven young men that resonates through the last eight decades. As we pay tribute to their memory, we acknowledge the profound impact of their service and the ultimate price they paid.

Each of these man, … a son, a brother, a friend, a husband, a father, … left behind a memory that time will never erode. Their courage serves as a testament to the brave spirit of those who fought against tyranny.

So we remember these brave men who were killed in action, but also the bereaved, the families which were shattered by the consequences of warfare.

Therefore, as we pay tribute to these seven heroes, we also extend our deepest sympathies to the families they left behind. The pain of their absence is still felt and their loss is a heart-breaking reminder of the cost of war and the price paid for peace.

And as we have gathered, we are reminded of the fragility of life. In the Christian faith, a commemoration is seen as a profound moment for reflection and remembrance. As a promise to the relatives of the crew of the Lancaster and to all of us: "We will always remember them." It serves as a bridge between the sorrow of loss and the eternal hope of the Gospel.

At this civic ceremony, I am invited as the chaplain of St. Mary’s, the Anglican and Episcopal church of Rotterdam. In our faith tradition, this memorial is not only a tribute to these men who have fallen, but also a comfort for us all of the enduring hope that death is not the end, but a transition to eternal life.

Also, we acknowledge the importance of peace and working for peace. Part of that is honouring sacrifices made on behalf of others.

‘No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends’ says the apostle John (John 15:13). These seven brave men - Charles, Colin, Douglas, Samuel, Edward, Herbert and Arthur - laid down their lives for people they did not even know. We have great respect for that and honour that. With their example we work and pray for peace.

So in line with the British Remembrance tradition, I am going to pray a prayer. You are invited to join with me, as you are comfortable. Or listen to it in the silence of your heart, as words of reflection.

Let us pray for all who suffer as a result of conflict,

and ask that God may give us peace.

For the service of Charles, Colin, Douglas, Samuel, Edward, Herbert and Arthur,

who died here in Papendrecht in the violence of war,

each one remembered by and known to God.

For those who love them in death as in life,

offering the distress of their grief

and the sadness of their loss.

For all members of the armed forces who are in danger this day,

remembering family, friends

and all who pray for their safe return.

For civilian women, children and men

whose lives are disfigured by war or terror,

calling to mind in penitence the anger and hatred of humanity.

For peace-makers and peace-keepers,

who seek to keep this world secure and free.

For all who bear the burden and privilege of leadership,

political, military and religious;

asking for gifts of wisdom and resolve

in the search for reconciliation and peace.

May God give peace.

Commemorating these courageous men who were killed in action, but also thinking of the bereaved - the families which were shattered by their loss - I would like to end with a well know poem by Laurence Binyon,

called *For the Fallen*:

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:

Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.

At the going down of the sun and in the morning

We will remember them.

Amen