



Create a peaceful space to pause, and allow yourself to feel God's presence alongside you, as near to you as your own breath. In following the reflection below, as a church we will draw closer to God and to one another as we grow in faith and deepen our sense of belonging to God.

John 15: 12-13 'Great Love Indeed'

¹² 'This is my commandment,
that you love one another as I have loved you.

¹³ No one has greater love than this,
to lay down one's life for one's friends.



On this Battle of Britain Day we remember the events of 80 years ago. As each year passes, there are fewer of those who actually witnessed what happened, any of the pilots, 'The Few' and those who kept them flying, have slowly passed into history.

I suspect that for most of us, young people particularly, the Battle of Britain conjures up little more than images that are largely kept alive by old films, and photographs and TV archives. Films like *Reach for the Sky* add a romantic gloss to what was anything but romantic; images of the iconic Spitfire and Hurricane; black and white photos of the ferocious bombing of London, of St Paul's Cathedral shrouded in smoke yet still standing as a symbol of defiance. The picture above, of a Spitfire over Beachy Head, reminds us of the dogfights over the South of England.

Churchill's speeches, especially his words after the Battle of Britain: "*Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few*" have stayed in the collective memory of the nation.

It's important to keep the memory alive – it's about men and women who changed the course of our history, about the victory they achieved which has shaped and influenced our lives; it's about values that are still relevant today. In this way we keep alive the memory of our brave British and Allied airmen, some still in their teens and just out of training, who fought desperately to stop an enemy invasion in 1940.

How shall we remember this day? We can retell the story and honour past heroes; we can re-learn the lessons it teaches us, as the philosopher George Santayana said: "*Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it*". However, I believe that the right use of memory is as a stimulus to action. Let us be people who learn from the past and as today we keep alive the memory of past days, may it become an inspiration to us to build, to give, to work for freedom, peace and justice, to build bridges of understanding and reconciliation – and in doing this, be worthy of the sacrifice others made for us.

Prayer: Let us offer ourselves anew to the service of God and our neighbour in the prayer of St Ignatius of Loyola:



*Teach us good Lord to serve thee as thou deservest;
to give and not to count the cost;
to fight and not to heed the wounds;
to toil and not to seek for rest;
to labour and not to ask for any reward
save that of knowing that we do thy will.*