

REQUIEM MASS FOR THOSE KILLED IN BATTLE OF JUTLAND

Almost exactly at this moment, midday 100 years ago, 31st May 1916, the British fleet, under Admiral Sir John Jellicoe, engaged the German navy in the North Sea off the Coast of Denmark. The Battle of Jutland was the greatest naval battle of World War One, and a turning point in that war. 250 ships took part and although the British lost more ships and twice as many soldiers as the other side, in the long run the German Navy lost and arguably was never again able to put to sea effectively during the war. Over 6000 British sailors were killed, not to forget the 2500 of the enemy, and shortly after this Mass on Southsea Common I'll be joining a Royal Navy event to honour them. But in this Mass, let us pray for our fellow countrymen and women who died in service of Queen and country, and for all the dead, full of gratitude to them for their self-sacrifice, and praying for their eternal repose.

Do not let your love be a pretense St. Paul said in his Letter to the Romans *but sincerely prefer good to evil*. We commemorate the Battle of Jutland at a time when our country is preparing for a referendum on membership of the European Community. Let us ask God's guidance on our reflection. When we think of Europe, who can forget not only the First and Second World Wars but also the events of 1989 and the Fall of the Berlin Wall, leading to the demise of the communist regimes of Eastern Europe? Pope St. John Paul II was closely involved in those events and he often urged us to pray for a Europe re-united by its common baptism. Although today, given the waves of secularism that have swept the continent these last 25 years, this aspiration might seem distant, even so, we should pray today for the peoples of Europe. May the Holy Spirit, at work in our hearts, never again allow war to arise between us. And may He rouse up in everyone a renewed faith in Jesus Christ with an openness to the values of the Gospel.

Bless those who persecute you; never curse them, bless them. We mention these events as we recall today too the loving Visitation of the Virgin Mary to her cousin Elizabeth. Let's ask Mary's prayers. We pray through Mary's intercession for all who serve in the military and for their safety. May she be to them truly the Star of the Sea. We pray too for peace on earth and for an end to terrorism, war, violence. May she be to all the Queen of Peace. And we pray for Europe, for our politicians and policy-makers, and for Great Britain, that faced with the challenges of our times, all may work for true peace, for the care of the neediest, and for the wisdom to find the best ways forward. May Mary be for us the Mother of Good Counsel and the Seat of Wisdom.