

LIVERPOOL ARCHDIOCESAN CENTRE FOR EVANGELISATION

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Reflection by The Most Reverend Patrick Kelly, Archbishop of Liverpool, broadcast by Vatican Radio during December 2009

No one in my country can fittingly keep this Advent Season and the Christmastide Feasts if they close their minds and hearts and feelings to Afghanistan and what that word means for tens of thousands this Christmas. Just as during the Second World War wise and good people decided at the FA Cup Final there could not be a forgetful surrender to the excitement of the game as thousands fought across Europe, Africa, the Far East, but had to begin with the haunting words and music of the hymn abide with me, fast fall the eventide, so a Christmas all forgetfulness, distraction, excitement is unworthy of the human heart this year. And the comfort families need who will wonder how someone dear to them spends Christmas Day, with a gun, using a gun, in the air, employing massive fire-power, may daringly be found in this: on Christmas Night we rejoice in the singing of the host of angels, but the Greek word for hosts is close to the word of army; it is the source of our words, strategy and strategic. It is wisely said: when angels are around serious things are happening, determination, zeal, action is in the air. In so far those in the armed services are from this country are far from home this Christmas, they and their families ability to sleep in serenity, peace and pride depends on this: that force is being used to protect the innocent, to further justice for all especially the weak, the frail for women and children. Pope Paul the Great indeed, taught us: if you would seek peace, work for justice. As we seek to receive the peace of the Christmas Feast, this year it can only be found if we remember those who are seriously engaged in the pursuit of justice, even at the risk of their own life.