

**BBC RADIO ULSTER
THOUGHT FOR THE DAY
DAY OF REFLECTION
21ST JUNE 2007**

Today is Northern Ireland's first 'Day of Private Reflection'.

It's a day when you might want to take some time out, to reflect on the conflict of the past and your hopes for the future.

It's also the summer solstice - the longest day of the year.

A day that marks a pause in the cycle of nature – between light and dark – between looking back and looking forward.

A good day to reflect upon the darkness of the past and hope for a brighter future.

As I reflect upon the Troubles this morning, I remember the darkness of it all.

The sound of bullets in the playground.

The sight of blood on the street.

The smell of burning vehicles.

The taste of salty tears.

I remember men in dark glasses marching to war and women in flared trousers marching for peace.

I remember words of hatred and acts of inhumanity.

Loud voices for vengeance and quiet voices for peace.

I remember a neighbour shot and dying in my mother's arms.

I can see the sad eyes of a young man, whose father was killed in the 1970s, and I remember the day he too was murdered in the 1980s.

I remember the bright eyes of a friend, a wonderful young woman taken away from a loving family by a brutal bomb.

And I think of the thousands of lost lives.

The pain and trauma.

Lives shattered and many still suffering today.

But on this Day of Private Reflection, I also want to have a good look at myself.

To think of what I did and what I didn't do. What I said and what I didn't say.

What blood on my good clean Christian hands?

And as I look to the future, I reflect upon what small steps I can take to make sure this madness never happens again.

It was disturbing this week to hear the findings of a BBC survey into the lives of children born here since the ceasefires.

It found that most of our children, rich and poor, urban and rural, live segregated and parallel lives.

It's shocking to think that children with no memory of the Troubles are still so utterly divided.

On this Day of Private Reflection, we can hope and pray for a brighter future.

But I hope our private thoughts and prayers will shake us into action, to change this society, to make sure the darkness of the past is gone forever and the children, born into peace, can enjoy a shared and brighter future.