

- 1 The majority of mainland Europe was under Napoleon's control by 1812. In that year, he attacked Russia, leading to his downfall and abdication. He was exiled to the island of Elba in the Mediterranean. In March 1815, Napoleon escaped from Elba and returned to France. Men gathered under the French flag, and Europe was threatened with war once more.
- 2 The British Army, under the Duke of Wellington, approached the village of Waterloo in what is now Belgium. Along with Britain's allies, Wellington was about to engage Napoleon in battle at Waterloo on this day in 1815. A great deal depended on the outcome of the battle as to whether Napoleon would, once again, control all Europe. It could not be forgotten that Napoleon had previously intended to invade Britain. The sooner the news of the battle would reach London, the better. It was decided to send the message by semaphore, from hilltop to hilltop.
- 3 With semaphore, a person holds a flag in each hand. The position in which each flag is held represents a single letter. Obviously a message can only be read if the person's flags can be seen.
- 4 For several days a man looked towards the south coast from one of the semaphore points, the tower of Winchester Cathedral. At last, in semaphore, the words of a message were spelt out:

WELLINGTON DEFEATED.
- 5 At that point a mist swept across, and the watcher could see no more. The disastrous message was then passed on, tower to tower, hilltop to hilltop, all the way to London. It was thought to be a national tragedy.
- 6 The man on the tower of Winchester Cathedral still kept watch, waiting for the thick mist to clear, hoping to be able to pass on some details of the defeat. After a long time the mist cleared, and the semaphore started again. The first message had read:

WELLINGTON DEFEATED

but as the mist cleared, there were two additional words. Now the full message read:

WELLINGTON DEFEATED THE FRENCH.
- 7 Those two extra words completely changed the message. What was thought to be defeat was now seen to be victory! The revised message was sent on to London. Church bells pealed, and people cheered in the streets. That deadly first message was only the first part of a message that became good news.
- 8 We can remind ourselves that, at first, the capture and torture and death of Jesus was disastrous news. All the hopes of his followers had been lost. Three days later the news was completed - it was GOOD NEWS that Jesus had defeated even the power of death, and had risen to new life.

9 *Let us pray:*

Lord Jesus, you overpowered
the control that sickness had
by curing people of their illnesses.

Those who were disabled
were freed to walk again.

You calmed the sea
and showed that you had control
over even nature.

You rose to a new way of living
and showed that not even death
had power over you.

With your power in our lives,
everything that happens to us
can be turned to good.

We ask you this day
to help us to transform our difficulties
and draw goodness
out of what is negative in our lives,
knowing that there is nothing
in life or in death
that can ever separate us
from your love.

Amen.

This is an excerpt from the page of this date in
'Praying Each Day of the Year',
a 3-volume book
by Nicholas Hutchinson, FSC.

For details:

<http://www.matthew-james.co.uk/>

Could make use of a search engine
to research this topic further.

This material is part of
the prayer and education website
of the De La Salle Brothers
in Great Britain:
www.prayingeachday.org