

REMEMBERING THOSE WHO HAVE GIVEN THEIR LIVES FOR OTHERS

This is my commandment: love one another as I love you.
No one has greater love than this,
to lay down one's life for one's friends.
John 15: 12-13



We remember the many brave men and women
who have given their lives
through the history of our country
to protect us from danger and harm.

We salute all those who served
in the military, the police and the fire departments.

We also remember all those who sustained injury
in mind and/or body in the course of their service.



Let us pause and remember that God's Spirit fills the whole world,
from the east to the west, from the desert to the mountains.

Blessed are You, O God, for You have given us a share in Your life
and You dwell in us and in our midst.

In the name of God our Father and Creator,
and Jesus our Brother and Savior,
and the Holy Spirit Giver of Life and Grace.

Amen.

Micah 5: 1-5

In days to come the mount of the LORD'S house shall be established higher than the mountains; it shall rise high above the hills, and peoples shall stream to it:

Many nations shall come, and say, "Come, let us climb the mount of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, That He may instruct us in His ways, that we may walk in His paths." For from Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

He shall judge between many peoples and impose terms on strong and distant nations; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; one nation shall not raise the sword against another, nor shall they train for war again.

Every man shall sit under his own vine or under his own fig tree, undisturbed; for the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken.

For all the peoples walk each in the name of its god, but we will walk in the name of the LORD, our God, forever and ever.

Memorial Day: They Still Speak

Established in 1868 as a day to honor the fallen soldiers of the just concluded Civil War, Memorial Day has grown to become a solemn recognition of all of our nation's war dead and the high price of our freedoms.

There is the sense in which the dead, though silent, still speak -- the quality and character of their lives lingering long after they have gone.

The Gettysburg Address

Fourscore and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation or nation so conceived and so dedicated can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field as a final resting-place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this. But in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead who struggled here have consecrated it far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living rather to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task of remaining before us -- that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion -- that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain, that this nation under God shall have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth.

- Abraham Lincoln. November 19, 1863

Reflection

"Who will finish it?" "How can we possibly finish it?"

The young dead soldiers in Archibald McLeish's poem posed the question. "They say, 'We have done what we could but until it is finished it is not done.' They say, 'We have given our lives but until it is finished no one can know what our lives gave.'" Are they really talking to us? But how do we do it?

Abraham Lincoln posed the question. "It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us – that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion – that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain . . ." Surely Lincoln was talking to us! But how can we do it?

The last full measure of devotion – that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain . . ." Surely Lincoln was talking to us! But how can we do it?

The Gospel of John contains the very famous line; "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends." Jesus is talking about his own impending death, urging his disciples to understand that they are about to be faced with the most difficult quandary of their lives – the death of their leader and the necessity that they figure out a way to finish the work he has begun. "Is he talking to us?" they may well have asked themselves. "But how can we do it."

In the passage Jesus assures his disciples that they now know everything they need to know in order to carry out that mission. "But I have called you friends because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father." I'm pretty sure that those frightened and confused disciples didn't for a minute believe that they knew everything they needed to know! But eventually they did pull themselves together and attempt to do what was asked of them – to finish the job. Imperfect it may be, but the institution that they created has lasted for 2000 years and still counting.

Phyllis Theroux also posed the question – addressed in particular terms to contemporary Americans. Can we get past the tendency to either glorify war in the name of honoring the dead, or disrespect those who serve in the armed forces in the name of being honest about the horror of war? I know she was talking to us. Can we do it? I believe that we can. I've seen the evidence.

The way for us to finish the work of those who have died in America's wars is for us to think seriously about what those wars were fought for, without minimizing the price. Oh, we talk about what it was those wars were fought for – money, say the cynics and perhaps the realists, freedom, others say, or peace. The label given to the First World War, the 'war to end all wars' may just be the greatest irony of the twentieth century. That project failed – and threats to freedom and peace and economic security also - we will always have among us. Given that, how do we finish the work of those who died fighting for those very things?

Too often, we Americans treat Memorial Day as a holiday without meaning – an extra day at the beach, or on the hiking trails. Probably what I would have done if I had not found myself forced to think about its deeper meaning. Having heard the urgent question about the unfinished work of our war dead – and begun to think about a response – I can say that I am grateful. Today, I understand Memorial Day for what it was meant to be. A reminder, not just of those who have died, but also of the obligation that we, the living, all share. The great task remaining before us, Lincoln called it. The task of every citizen and every religious community. Our task, together.

"Those Honored Dead"

"Why do you fly the flag today?"

My Grandson wants to know.

I fly it for the graveyards

Where the countless crosses grow.

I fly the flag for children

Whose fathers are a name.

**A half-remembered memory
of a face within a frame.**

I fly it for the families

of sons and daughters lost.

They know the price of liberty

How terrible the cost!

I fly the flag for veterans

who lost their youth in blood.

**And saw their comrades slaughtered
in the carnage and the mud.**

I fly it for the ones who marched

In cadence off to war

To close their eyes forever

Upon some foreign shore.

I fly the flag for grief poured out

Upon a granite wall.

The laying-on of hands that heals

The scars within us all.

I fly it for the sound of Taps---

That melancholy tune

That lays to rest those honored dead

Who always die too soon.



Reading: 1 Thessalonians 4: 13-18

We do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, about those who have fallen asleep, so that you may not grieve like the rest, who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose, so too will God, through Jesus, bring with Him those who have fallen asleep.

Indeed, we tell you this, on the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will surely not precede those who have fallen asleep.

For the Lord Himself, with a word of command, with the voice of an archangel and with the trumpet of God, will come down from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore, console one another with these words.

Psalm 23

Shepherd me, O God, beyond my wants, beyond my fears, from death into life.

God is my Shepherd, so nothing shall I want.
I rest in the meadows of faithfulness and love.
I walk by the quiet waters of peace.

Gently You raise me and heal my weary soul,
You lead me by pathways of righteousness and truth,
My spirit shall sing the music of Your name.

Though I should wander the valley of death,
I fear no evil, for You are at my side, Your rod and Your staff,
My comfort and my hope.

You have set me a banquet of love in the face of hatred,
Crowning me with love beyond my power to hold.

Surely Your kindness and mercy follow me all the days of my life;
I will dwell in the house of my God for evermore.

Intercessions

Keeping in mind the thousands of men and women who have given their lives in the line of duty, we honor their memories and remember them, their families and friends in prayer.

May these women and men rejoice in the presence of the Risen Lord.

May You, O Compassionate and Loving God, be with the families and friends of those who have died.

Lord of Promise, give them consolation and hope, strength and comfort.

We pray for all who have suffered psychological and/or physical wounds in the defense of freedom and justice.

God of healing, restore them to full health in mind and body.

We pray for all the peoples of our country that we may come to appreciate the dedication and service provided to and for us by those in the military, the police and the fire departments.

Loving Lord, reward them for their labors and their sacrifice on our behalf.

May we be forever grateful to God for the freedom we possess as citizens of the United States of America.

May we work for justice and peace for all peoples and share our giftedness with others.

May greed, envy, lust for power and control be removed from the hearts of all peoples and nations.

Lord of all peoples, help us to realize that You are our God and we are all Your daughters and sons.

May we learn to wage peace so that no more people of any nation will die in war.

Lord, give us Your peace. Fill us with Your Holy Spirit.

Let us pray:

O Lord, hear our pray this day and answer them as only You know best. May we graciously accept Your will in our regard and we trust that whatever we ask in Christ's name, You will give us. Amen.

A Memorial Day Prayer

O God of Life and of History, we gather on this occasion for sacred remembrance and a renewal of the Spirit. We remember with a sense of gratitude and humility the thousands upon thousands who have died in this nation's wars and conflicts. We come to renew our resolution to make of their deaths a meaning that shall be for peace and justice and the birth of a new hope in the earth.

May we remember this day the dead not only of our nation's wars, but also of all wars in all lands where men, women and children have lost their lives to the harsh and bitter cruelty of human combat. In our remembrance may we not be puffed up with the overbearing pride of a false and narrow patriotism, but rather may we be endowed with a generous patriotism that reaches out to the human family on every continent and shore. May we come to love the earth and your universal kingdom of love and justice with a zeal equal to and surpassing our love of country. Make us more compassionate, loving and forgiving as we call to mind the tragic deaths wrought by so many wars in so many lands that our hearts cannot contain them for fear of breaking.

Shalom, pacem, om shanti. Let peace come in a thousand tongues and a myriad of languages. May we renew ourselves in that life-long quest for the impossible dream of "Thy kingdom come on earth as it is in the heaven" of our dearest wishes, fondest hopes and heartfelt prayers. So be it. Amen.

A Blessing

May the truth that makes us free,
the hope that never dies,
and the love that casts out fear,
lead us forward together, till the dayspring breaks and the shadows flee away.
Amen.

May the peace of God that passes all understanding,
that peace which the world can neither give nor take away,
abide with us to bless us,
this day, and even forever more.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.



Saint John Baptist de La Salle
and all you holy Brothers who have gone before us,
help us to educate for peace.
Amen.

Live Jesus in our hearts. Forever!



Blessed are they who mourn for they shall be comforted.