

From Your Pastor

“No Greater Love...” ~ Memorial Day 2009 ~ Requiescant in Pacem



Memorial Day is perhaps best known to young Americans as the day that marks the unofficial first day of summer. But this well-loved national holiday has a much nobler and far more beautiful meaning. Memorial Day was first proclaimed in 1868 to honor those men and women buried in Arlington National Cemetery who died serving our beloved nation in a time of war. From its beginning Memorial Day has been all about acknowledging and remembering those who made the supreme sacrifice in order to defend the lives, liberty and pursuit of happiness of their fellow citizens.

Many little practices have been introduced since 1868 to highlight and to strengthen the importance of Memorial Day. For example, around the time of World War I a woman from Georgia named Moina Belle Michael introduced the custom of wearing red poppies on Memorial Day to honor of those who died for their country. The proceeds from the sale of the poppies goes to the welfare of our veterans and to the well being of their dependents. In the 1950s, the custom developed of placing flags on Memorial Day at the graves of the deceased members of the armed services. Thankfully, both of these customs became traditions and they survive in our own time to keep alive the original significance of the day.

In the Gospel of last week – the Sixth Sunday of Easter, Jesus says to his disciples: “No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (Jn 15:13). He might have been speaking about our servicemen and women who have given their lives for us on the field of battle. In fact, their sacrifice goes beyond what the Lord asked of his disciples, because these men and women gave their

lives not only for friends but for strangers – for those they would never know in this life. Their sacrifice has its origin in love – love of neighbor and love of country; and it is precisely this love which makes their sacrifice such an extraordinary gift to us.

Memorial Day is a special time to remember as well the families of the men and women who gave their lives defending the liberty that we enjoy. I think of spouses who have lost their best friend, and of children who have lost their first love. I think of Gold Star Mothers and Fathers who never imagined that their daughter or son could predecease them. I think of brothers and sisters who have lost their mentor or protégé. In a very real way, the loss that these family survivors live with every day is a true part of the sacrifice that their loved one has made in our behalf. May the Lord comfort these survivors in their sorrow.

Over the years, Memorial Day has transformed into a day when many of us go to the cemeteries to visit and to pray for all of our deceased loved ones. As we make our visits this year, may the flags we see dotting the landscape remind us of Memorial Day’s first meaning and purpose. Let us take a moment to thank those who have given their lives for our freedom. And let us raise our hearts in thanks and in prayer to God who gave these men and women the desire and the courage to love us so unselfishly:

Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord.

And let perpetual light shine upon them.

May they rest in peace.

Amen.

May their souls and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace.

Amen.



God bless each of you.

Mrs. Fay