

Memorial Day Faith

As we celebrate those who gave their lives for America, those men and women who died in active military service, we must give thanks and be inspired by the sacrifice it has taken to make America a country of wonder and opportunity.

There will be Memorial Day gatherings and prayers and tributes. There will be parades and cookouts and other celebrations during the Memorial Day weekend. Please take a moment to give thanks for those who sacrificed all so that we might live. Never take our freedom, or the beauty and blessing of America, for granted.

We are raising generations of Americans who do not take our blessings for granted. Many think they deserve them just because of who they are. Our blessings are many, but they are blessings built on generation after generation of sacrifice and cooperation for a common cause.

It is nice to think of the signers of the Declaration of Independence as good writers and thinkers. But many don't realize that many of them lost their lives, and most lost their families and possessions because of their stand against England and for their new country.

I think of soldiers of all the wars who fought and conquered the enemy. They won, willing to give their lives for us. And those who died in battle gave the ultimate sacrifice.

There are millions of graves of veterans in this country, and funerals happen for those who were protected by them every day. Perhaps a prayer for the veterans every time we enter the cemetery would be a blessing for us and for our country.

The following poem was written by young Lieutenant-Colonel John McCrae when he had to do the funeral of his good friend who died in the battle of Ypres in Belgium. He was amazed at how quickly red poppies grew around the graves of soldiers from the battle. They have since become a symbol of our respect and thanks for our soldiers who died in battle as well.

In Flanders Fields

In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.

There is an idea of passing of responsibility of the battle for tomorrow in this poem. Both as citizens, as soldiers, and as Christians in the world we are called to arms to give our all so that tomorrow may be better.

Memorial Day in this world is a wonderful thing. It can call Christians to remember the death of their Saviour Jesus to win the final war against death and evil.

The poppies call us to remember life in the midst of death. They call us to see the flowers growing, showing new life and possibility accomplish specifically because of the people who died for their country and people.

The cross of Jesus, tradition says made from a dogwood tree, beckons Christians to new life in this world and to eternal life beyond. It calls us to wonderful, blessed moments with other Christian soldiers all over the world.

In most modern hymnals, songs like “Onward Christian Soldiers” and “Mine Eyes Have Seen The Glory” have been removed to take out the warlike language of faith. It seems to be that we need that urgency in today’s world. We must realize that we are in a spiritual war that must be won at all costs. The shield of faith, helmet of salvation, the sword of the Spirit are part of the armor God gives us to save the world and tell them about Jesus.

This beautiful hymn, not very military but very full of a call to duty, familiar to most Christians, was penned about Jesus about at thousand years ago. It calls us to a hope above the world, but centered in it while we are still residents.

Jesus, the very thought of thee
With sweetness fills my breast;
But sweeter far thy face to see
And in thy presence rest.

Nor voice can sing, nor heart can frame,
Nor can the mem'ry find
A sweeter sound than thy blest name,
O Savior of mankind!

O hope of ev'ry contrite heart,
O joy of all the meek,
To those who fall, how kind thou art!
How good to those who seek!

Jesus, our only joy be thou,
As thou our prize wilt be;
Jesus, be thou our glory now,
And thru eternity. ~Bernard of Clairvaux, ca. 1091-1153;

Blessings and peace to the families and friends of soldiers who have served in wars on earth and wars for heaven. This is indeed a time to remember and give thanks for those who have gone before us.

Let Memorial Day be a time to give thanks, and to fight the battle for freedom and faith with renewed vigor. As the last verse of the Poppy Poem says, those who fought and died before us are counting on us to take up the battle.