

Church of the Good Shepherd
and
St. John the Evangelist

2nd Sunday of Pentecost
June 6, 2004
Fr. Bill McGinty

“Freedom’s Price!”

This is a week of graduations. Up and down the land, high school seniors are dressing up for their commencement services in caps and gowns. The school band will play Pomp and Circumstance by Elgar and parents will gleam with pride at their shiny new graduate. Twelve years of schooling in every academic subject; twelve years of sports, twelve years of learning American values, and twelve years of saluting the flag and pledging the oath of Allegiance come to completion in one brief ceremony.

At this week’s commencement, Friday, at my school I asked myself why am I here? What is it all about? Before me paraded a wonderful group of young Americans; smart and talented, and downright decent young adults. And my mind was immediately swept away on Friday’s sunny afternoon to another group of young Americans far, far away. Far away in miles across the cold gray Atlantic; and far away in years on that June day, 60 years ago today when they boarded landing craft and huddled together before they hit the beaches in the greatest amphibious landing the world had ever seen: “D.Day.”

And there is such a connection between my graduates and these young American boys. First, many of them were roughly the same age, college age. But they were not going to college; they were going to fight – to fight the greatest battle and the greatest evil the world had ever seen. My young graduates walked to receive their honors last Friday because they were free to do so. They pledged their oath to “Old Glory” because they were free to do so. The virtues they take to college are our American values. They are free to do so because that freedom was bought at a great price on the beaches of Normandy 60 years ago today.

In 1972 I visited the American World War II cemetery at Avarance in Normandy, France. As I pulled in the gate, I was met by a young American marine lieutenant/color guard. He gave us a tour of the chapel and museum, with the flags and colors of every regiment that took part in the Battle of Normandy. Scenes from the battle would be seen in mosaic on the chapel wall. Then he took us to the cemetery – we walked a narrow path up a slight hill through a rose garden. At the crest, we stopped, stood and stared. Before us, for field after field, over valley and hillside, was row upon row of white crosses. They covered the landscape till they disappeared on the horizon.

We walked the rows and read the names Scott, Brown, Vernon, Perwinski, Farnelli, and below the names – their rank, regiment, and age – 17, 19, 20, 21, 18.....and we wondered how long they had been out of high school and which little town in the mid-west, or Texas or Pennsylvania or some other state they came from. We felt sad that they would never even go home where they belonged. They would only ever lie here – young Americans, their white crosses dotting the landscape like lilies in the green fields on France.

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We may ask ourselves the question what gave these young people the backbone to make the ultimate sacrifice that others might live in freedom. Perhaps on those craft before they hit the beaches they did indeed think of the future generations who would benefit from their sacrifice.

60 years of Americans have now been born into freedom since that day. Today, we gather to celebrate the newest generation of American to join the family and today Christ's Christian Family Kenard Brian Lee III, son of Kenard and Rachel It is with joy and great happiness that we bestow on him the Sacrament of Baptism. With it comes God's love. With it comes the protection of the Holy Spirit – that he may live and grow surrounded by the love of his family. Today Kenard and Rachel hold his Candle of Faith and swear to keep that flame of faith alive in his life until he reaches adulthood.

We have always believed that this is a Godly nation, founded by Godly men. In times of greatest peril that Christian identity has proved to be a bond of unity and strength.

Our prayer for Kenard today is that he will find in his Christian family a home a set of values, and a strength to carry him through the ups and downs, and through the perils of his life.

Yesterday, a great American died – Ronald Reagan, President of the United States of American – 1980 – 1988. At the coldest period of the cold war, he stood up in 1982 and told the Soviet Union on world television, "You are an evil empire and we in the west will never succumb to your tyranny – your own people are afraid of you. You have nothing to offer but darkness and despair. In the name of all that is good, I command you to tear down your walls of hate and come join the freedom loving nations of the world – in a new era for mankind!"

We will not see his like again, but we will remember that the America we build for Kenard and his generation was made possible by those who went before.

Let us pray.

Lord, bless this child, who joins your family of salvation today. Gift him with every grace. Strengthen him with your spirit. May he walk the pathway of freedom – may he learn at school of equality and justice, may he live in love and peace, won for him by America's youth who laid down their lives for him. May he live under your protection and grow in your love to serve you and this nation all the days of his life." Amen +

Today is also Trinity Sunday. The day we honor the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. What greater way to celebrate Trinity Sunday than by baptizing this little child – in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. From today on he is marked by his Baptism. The Cross – the sign of all Christians becomes his sign and his symbol. ay he wear it with pride and honor always.

Amen +

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