

Trinity Sunday  
May 30, 2010  
Fr. Bill McGinty

### **“Today, we honor them”**

This Sunday is a dynamic day in the church’s calendar. Not only is it Trinity Sunday, the first Sunday after Pentecost, but it is also Veteran’s Sunday, when we honor our fallen in every war and all those who served. One of those who served John Potter, served in Vietnam. He is here today with Nancy his wife of 30 years. This is the day they have chosen to renew their vows and re-commit themselves to each other. It could not come at a better time nor a better place, surrounded by servicemen from our own Tri-State area, who together gather to honor comrades lost, but never forgotten, in conflicts as far back as 1941. In doing so they give us the opportunity to honor them and thank them for their service, a service they gave willingly for freedom and right, on our behalf. In standing with Nancy and John today, they represent a color guard, that any regiment or corps would be proud of.

I once asked a teacher of mine, who served from North Africa fighting Rummel all the way to Anzio, and the gates of Rome: “Where does God fit into all of this?” He took from his pocket an old prayer book, battered and torn.

“This book never left my tunic pocket, next to my heart, for five years,” he said, “It has been deeper in foxholes than any Desert Rat. It was soaked wet through at Salerno, and the mud on it came from Monte Cassino. It was a comfort through long nights when I had no words of my own, when only God, Jesus and the need of redemption made any sense. Oh, I took some stick from the lads when they saw me reading it, but more often they had that stare of envy in their eyes, for the kind of faith that simply kept me going day after day, kept my legs moving forward and my lungs going in and out, in the knowledge that somehow, he could see me through.”

There are a million stories of ordinary men and women who served by land, air and sea, many of whom survived war to come home, build and raise a family, and quietly return to living out their lives in this land. Today we honor them. Still we remember those who did not come home and who lie beneath a cross or stone in a foreign field. We honor them.

Today we gather to pray for, support and honor, a third group, those who today, are serving, are dying and are fighting in a foreign land, on our behalf. Today, we pray for our soldiers, sailors and airmen. Forty years ago, pictures of Vietnam flooded our televisions news screens, night after night. Daily reports filled our newspapers. After eight years of war in Iraq and Afghanistan, we do not get any of that. Government now restricts the flow

of war coverage to the American public. Yet, we all know that conflict continues, fighting goes on, our men and women die on a daily basis, and for a cause that is no different from WW II Korea or Vietnam. Today, we pray for them and their families. For 60 years, the lovely people of South Korea have lived in peace and in freedom. Yet, if we ever needed to justify our reasons for vigilance in the face of evil, it can surely be witnessed looking to the north and the same evil that spurred us to action and sacrifice 60 ears ago. Evil does not change. Communists have not become good guys. Tyranny, imprisonment of the innocence, and the chaining of the human spirit, continues. As long as they do, we who love freedom, equality and justice, will ask our sons and daughters to bear arms that evil shall not triumph. Today we honor them.

There have always been those especially in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, who have seen war and the military as no kind of solution to world problems. Wilson before the 1<sup>st</sup> World War, Neville Chamberlain, Prime Minister of Britain in 1939, Gandhi in India and many more. In an ideal world, we would all want peace and an end to violence and conflict. But we don't live in an ideal world. We live in a world where minorities are quite prepared to set aside elections and the democratic process for their own agenda and greed. Teddy Roosevelt's advice to "walk gently, but carry a big stick" is something I practiced on a soccer field fifty years ago. It works really well.

Progress for us, even us Christians, cannot be had at the expense of learning the lessons of history. 500 years ago, the Ottoman Empire swept across North Africa and the Balkans, Cypress and Crete and threatened the whole of Western Europe with a concept called Jihad or Holy war. Christian leaders met that threat just east of the Island Fortress of Malta in the Mediterranean. There in a long and vicious siege, 500 knights of St John held out against incredible odds.

When the Christian leaders gathered their ships, they met the Muslim fleet at the Battle of Lepanto. As the battle raged, the whole of Europe, in many city and town waited on the outcome. After two days of battle, the Christians were victorious, destroying the vast fleet of their enemy, to the extent that it was never again a threat and the Ottoman Empire went into steep decline.

Yet, the news was saddened by the great and mighty loss of so many young Christian men. In every town, the church bells tolled for months as the returning dead were buried and laid to rest. Freedom is not free, sacrifice is not counted in dollars, but in the loss of those, whose lives should have only just began.

Today, we have an opportunity to celebrate the life of all of you who came home, home to the ones you loved, and the ones who waited for you.

John and Nancy we pray for you in this Eucharist that God continue to bless you and fill your lives with his grace and love. Today's first reading invites us to seek wisdom. It is a commodity we are not well acquainted with, until we are much older. Wisdom, the queen of virtues, long may it reign in our lives. Paul, who has seen a thing or two, extols us in the 2<sup>nd</sup> reading that from our suffering will come character and hope. He assures us, that through faith in Christ, we are now much stronger than we used to be. All that we have been through, all that we have endured has made us stronger.

In the Gospel Jesus leaves his disciples with one abiding message, "Find the truth and live and die by it."

Memorial Day comes around each year to remind all of us of the examples of men and women who lived and died by their truth, for them it had its own symbol, not just as the symbol of a country, but a star spangled symbol of everything we human beings can aspire to, in freedom, equality, justice and decency. They tell us that if those things are worth dying for, they are also worth living for. Today we honor them.

Amen+