



MEMORIAL DAY HOMILY - 2019

Recently we celebrated first communion with all the kids in second grade and I spoke to them about the Eucharist.

If you ask a theologian what the Eucharist is all about, he or she will tell you it is the pre-eminent sacrament because it not only gives grace, it is the author of grace himself - our Lord and Savior, Jesus.

They will tell you that the Eucharist is an outward sign instituted by Jesus - and lest they be misunderstood about the real presence when they use the word "sign" they will go on to talk to us about transubstantiation and how that is different from con-substantiation, or impanation, or transignification and on and on it goes. Obviously, that is not the way to talk to children...

I tell the children that the Eucharist is a miracle that Jesus gives us. It is his body and blood and when we eat the consecrated bread and drink the consecrated wine, we become one with him...what an awesome miracle.

Then I ask the children why Jesus did this.

Jesus himself gives us the answer at every Mass. After the priest consecrates the bread and wine, he holds up the chalice and on behalf of Jesus, he gives us the reason, he says, "Do this in memory of Me".

In effect, Jesus was saying to his friends, "I need to be remembered by you. There is much you do not yet understand, but understand this, I need you to remember." Remember what? Remember that there is no greater love, than laying down one's life for others. That's what soldiers do in war...that's what Jesus did on Good Friday.

What goes through a soldier's mind when he or she is about to die? I can't begin to imagine, but know this: there is a burning need to be remembered. Today we do that, we remember all the men and women who died in service to our country. It is Memorial Day. We live in the land of the free and the home of the brave. It is more accurate to say, we live in the land of the free because of the brave.

It is the **VETERAN**, not the preacher, who has given us freedom of religion.

It is the **VETERAN**, not the reporter, who has given us freedom of the press.

It is the **VETERAN**, not the poet, who has given us freedom of speech.

It is the **VETERAN**, not the campus organizer, who has given us freedom to assemble.

It is the **VETERAN**, not the lawyer, who has given us the right to a fair trial.

It is the **VETERAN**, not the politician, who has given us the right to vote.

It is the **VETERAN**, who salutes the Flag, when others refuse to stand.

It is the **VETERAN**, who serves under the Flag, when he or she is laid to rest.

They need to be remembered and today, we remember them. You know some of them by name. All of them are our brothers and sisters in the mystical body of Christ. And so, we pray:

ETERNAL REST GRANT THEM O LORD AND LET
PERPETUAL LIGHT SHINE UPON THEM.
MAY THEY REST IN PEACE.

