May 26, 2019: Sixth Sunday of Easter

As we celebrate Memorial Day weekend, we remember all those who so willing placed their lives on the line, to ensure that our way of life could continue. This celebration began in Waterloo, New York in 1866 and quickly spread to many other communities. It began in the aftermath of the US Civil War, which saw the greatest number of American lives lost of any conflict. On May 30, 1868, the tradition of decorating the gravestones of soldiers began, and it was called Decoration Day. At first it was only celebrated for those who fought in the Civil War, but after World War I the tradition was expanded to all soldiers who lost their lives in any conflict. In 1971, it became a Federal holiday and was designated for the last Monday of May.

As our nation pauses to recognize and remember the great sacrifices that our soldiers and their families have made, it is also necessary to recognize those who continue to do so. We still have soldiers in Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq, and other dangerous places. Each day we have members of our military who willingly place their lives in harms way for our nation. It is easy to simply put that out of our minds as we go on living our day-to-day lives. But, the reality is that their dedication to service is fundamental to our way of life.

The men and women who make this choice sacrifice a great deal for our good: they are not there to support their spouses in many different ways; many do not see the birth of their children or watch milestone moments; and they can be called away at a moment’s notice for the good of the nation, and the needs of family and friends cannot be a consideration. It is even more difficult if both spouses are in the military and both are called to active duty in combat areas. They need to scramble to work things out, and this can place a great strain on family life. In spite of all this, they recognize the importance of what they feel called to do.

Memorial Day ostensibly is, of course, for those who paid the ultimate sacrifice of laying down their lives for the nation. But it behooves us, on this day, to also recognize two things. First, the sacrifices they and their families have made is something that one day of recognition cannot fully commemorate. We are so blessed as a nation by their dedication in support of the ideals of our nation. Secondly, the sacrifice that all military families make in being separated from their loved one is a great burden. You cannot know from day to day if they will be called to combat service, and if they are called, then it is the daily worry and concern for their safety.

As a Christian community it is necessary for us to be there for those in need. I believe that our military families really could use our support. They are making the ultimate choices to help us live out our lives, and I think maybe it would be great to give back to them. I am wondering if someone(s) would be willing to take on a new ministry of outreach and support to military families. It could be something as simple as sending care packages to our men and women in the service. In so many ways those in combat have become the forgotten by our nation—unless something ‘big’ happens, and then we remember. But, as quickly as it goes off the front page or the news cycle, it goes to the back of our minds again. It would be great if we could let them know that we do remember them and that we truly appreciate what they have given up to make our lives better.

If you have any questions about anything, please do not hesitate to ask me directly, or send your questions to me at fr.brian@chelmsfordcatholic.org.

Please keep me in your prayers.

In Christ,

Fr. Brian