

**Homily given by parishioner Maureen Brady's daughter, Captain
Kathleen Lindenmayer, USN at the Memorial Day Mass at St.
Bridget Cemetery on 5/31/10.**

Thank you father Fador and parishioners of St. Bridget for giving me this opportunity to stand in front of you today. I am honored and humbled to be able to stand here as a veteran, before you in worship, reflection and in prayer. I appreciate this invitation as it has allowed me a way to honor the memory of those with whom I have served, but most notably honor those who gave the ultimate sacrifice and cannot be counted among the veterans living today.

Memorial Day is the time for Americans to reconnect with their history and core values by honoring those who gave their lives for the ideals we, the living, can cherish. As we reflect here today, surrounded by the peaceful remains of so many men and women who have served our great nation...we remember the many, many others who rest in many other military cemeteries throughout the world. As Abraham Lincoln instructed, It is fitting and proper for us to honor our dead... but I believe we should do this not only as Americans, but also as followers of Christ.

We can mourn the loss of these great Americans, but we do not mourn as those who have no hope of life after death... We truly believe that Jesus died and rose from the dead and will bring to eternal life all of those believing in him and trusting in his love.

We have confidence that to those who have died fighting for a nation and liberty under God...Jesus will continue to show them the Way....the Truth and the Life.

There should be no conflict between our loyalty to our God and our loyalty to our country. These loyalties reinforce each other—because God has not sent us to live our lives in isolation or privacy. By divine appointment, we are members of a home, of a community, of a nation, just as to be Catholic is to be a member of the Church that Jesus Christ founded. To live as God intended us to live, we must fulfill our obligations in each of these spheres.

The values for which each of these patriots stood is wholly consistent with those of our church. Our military has core values that are instilled from the moment we don the uniform. Navy has 3...Army has 7....and I suppose this is like the 10 commandments....distilled 2000 years ago for us by Jesus down to 2: Love

they God and Love thy neighbor. But it all comes down to: Love.

[Core Values--Navy: Honor/Courage/Commitment
Army: Loyalty/duty/respect/selfless-service/honor/ integrity/personal
courage.]

I have rarely seen this played out more eloquently and beautifully than by those in Service to our Nation. I have seen the greatest caring, the greatest love, and the greatest ideals....shown unconditionally and on behalf of every other American, whether they are part of the military or an ordinary citizen.

For the veteran, it all starts simply with an oath....an oath that becomes a covenant. Doing whatever it takes, under law....for always...even after the uniform is shed. Even though the service member might have a “contract” that kept them under duty for a specified period, the understanding and meaning of the covenant of service remained.

**This too is distilled down to the same thing:
Love and honor God.
by doing what is right and honorable;
always make decisions in the best interest of your nation...;
and respect/take care of each and every person.**

The men and women who serve, and who have served, in the Armed Forces are no less committed to protecting our nation than were the men who signed The Declaration of Independence. Their final words declare that “... for the Support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor.”

President Truman once stated: “I think I know the American Soldier..... He does not want gratitude or sympathy. He had a job to do. He did not always like it. But he did it. And how he did it. Now he wants to come back home and start again the life he loved.....”

And I echo his sentiment, with the utmost respect for those who withstood the rigors and threats of battle to provide each of us with the opportunity for life. And while the thought of loss of life does not deter these soldiers, **thoughts of preserving liberty and freedom were much stronger and kept them marching on to their objective.** I am sure that Mr. Truman's words and these thoughts describe each of the soldiers who have given their service to America for more than two hundred years.

Saint Augustine acknowledged in his writings:
The purpose of all war is ultimately peace

Though our nation is divided by different political views and different interpretations of world's events..... one thing is very true: we are all united in our love for our country and for our desire for peace.

I mentioned a moment ago of the covenant that starts with an oath. Each veteran promises the following: "...to serve and protect our constitution against all enemies foreign and domestic....bearing true faith and allegiance to the same.....taking the obligation freely....So Help Me God." They understand that God alone is the way to true peace.

In pursuit of this Peace, well more than a million American service members died in the wars and conflicts this nation fought since the first colonial soldiers took up arms in 1775 to fight for independence. Each person who died during those conflicts was a loved one cherished by family and friends. Each was a loss to the community and the nation.

The observance of this day was born of compassion and empathy, becoming a part of the fabric of the entire nation by the late 1800s, recognizing our fallen in all wars.

Sadly, in this 21st century, many Americans have lost this connection with their history. All too many Americans today view military service as an abstraction, as only the image seen on television and in movies. For a growing percentage of the American people, Memorial Day has come to mean simply a three-day weekend or

a major shopping day. Families might still gather for picnics, but for many of them, the patriotic core and the spirit of remembrance, is frequently not there.

This is partially because many Americans have no experience with or connection to the military. We have fewer and fewer veterans to share their stories. And many of our older veterans - especially those from World War II and Korea - tend to be reticent. They often don't talk about their service.

And today, we have the smallest military we've had in 50 years. Unlike past periods in our history, the majority of members of Congress today have not served in the military. Many younger Americans do not have any relatives or even neighbors who serve now or have ever served in the military. In fact, many Americans today have never even met a Soldier, Sailor, Airman or Marine. This is both ironic and unfortunate. In recent history-2001-we suffered a horrendous attack on our own soil....and our military. the best military relative to any, in any time, any nation was there to meet it.

Who is this veteran? He/she is a volunteer, a high school grad; he/she is the best trained, best led ever. He is equip'd better than any Soldier, Sailor, Airman or Marines in our history—in anyone's history. Today he is serving in hellacious conditions, sometimes with repeated tours in these areas...he/she is one with their weapon....and at the ready to save lives, and my God, if necessary, have to take one....or give one. TV and internet images of our Soldier, Sailor, Airman or Marines seen at religious services, taking communion....are not staged. They are real. They are going into combat...and they need, and have real faith. And because they are Americans, they will not leave anyone behind, they will risk everything for the sake of their comrades....while in the process saving others, including our enemies if they can. You all should be very proud.

But we are living in a time of economic prosperity, when today's complex threats and battlefield environments are not well understood,and fewer young people are drawn to military service. Many of the services face challenges in reaching their recruiting goals. Nine out of 10 high school students surveyed say they have no interest in serving in the military. ROTC programs in our universities struggle to sign up cadets to fill the officer ranks.

This may not be news to many of you. You are possibly aware of the challenges involved in reconnecting the American people to their military. You've likely encountered some of the ignorance and apathy....and you may wonder what to do about it.

Pray.

Pray for an understanding of these challenges to our security. Pray for those Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen or Marines both deceased and still serving today in defense of you, your families and our great nation. You heard in today's Gospel: The Peacemakers are blessed. True and lasting peace is a gift that is given to those who seek conversion of heart and seek to fulfill God's will in their lives. And with prayer and the guidance and work of the Spirit, we can be confident in our collective prayers and their efforts toward true peace.

Pray for peace... in our families, our communities... in the Middle East...in Africa.... and throughout those many troubled spots throughout the world. Praying that men and women all over seek God's will in their lives.

Pray for our leaders....who make decisions affecting the security of our nation and make decisions on sending America's finest into harm's way.

But today is not a day of merely looking back; it is a day of looking forward, forward to the day when we can be with them. And it is a day of remembrance that we are still united with all of these people. All of those who died in the state of grace are part of the communion of saints. All of those in purgatory, all of those who are in heaven are united still with us, even more closely than they were when they were alive in this world. Even those who passed away before we were born, we are united with them all in Jesus Christ.

Please know that it is families, friends, you and the rest of the American people who keep our Soldier, Sailor, Airman or Marines going. You can continue to make a difference by not forgetting their sacrifice-by your prays here today.

**America's debt of gratitude is reflected in these words by Charles
M. Province:**

"It is the Soldier, not the reporter,
Who has given us Freedom of the Press.
It is the Soldier, not the poet,
Who has given us Freedom of Speech.
It is the Soldier, not the campus organizer,
Who has given us the Freedom to demonstrate.
It is the Soldier, not the lawyer,
Who has given us the right to a fair trial;
And it is the Soldier--who salutes the flag,
Who serves the flag, and
Whose coffin is draped by the flag--
Who allows the protester to burn the flag."

I would like to conclude my thoughts today with a true story. The great statesman, Winston Churchill, had planned his funeral, which took place in the UK's Saint Paul's Cathedral. After a service filled with church hymns and an eloquent Anglican liturgy...at his direction, a bugler, positioned high in the dome of Saint Paul's, played after the benediction, the sound of Taps, the universal signal that puts the day to rest. But then—a surprise. As Churchill instructed, as soon as Taps was completed, another bugler, placed on the other side of the dome, played the notes of Reveille——It's time to get up. It's time to get up. It's time to get up in the morning. ||

Confident in our faith, we celebrate that the very ones we remember today, though they have died, rise to the new day in God's kingdom. We are closer to home, but our day is not done. It's time for us to wake up. So much has yet to be done!

**Thank you God, for the men and women of our military whom we
honor today, who gave of their lives that we might live in peace. Let
us honor them not only with words but with lives led by truth,
seeking justice, and using our freedom to truly love others as Christ
has loved us. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called
children of God."**