

[Readings: Acts 2:14a, 36-41; Psalm 23; 1 Peter 2:20b-25; John 10:1-10]

Some of the following stories you may have heard before, especially if you are part of our Daily Mass crew. I offer these reflections especially for our First Communicants and for our FAM youth members. I first thought about diocesan priesthood when I was in the second grade, and then more seriously in high school.

Picture it. 1968. The K-Mart store on Sherwood and Outer Drive in Detroit. I am about fourteen years old. I am in one aisle. My mom is shopping in another aisle. All of a sudden, there is a crash and a boom. My mom cries out, "Nicholas?!" I shout back, "It wasn't me, Mom!" Now we fast forward forty years to the year 2008. This time I am at the K-Mart on Gratiot near 23 Mile Road. I am investigating some of the stock. As I hold the item which is not at all heart smart in my hand, I hear my Mom's voice: "Nicholas, put that down right now!" I comply immediately and put it down. I don't want a spanking. Then I realize. Mom has been dead for nine years, and I'm 54 years old! Whose voice was it? I turned the corner of the next aisle and discovered that it was the voice of a young mom running after her toddler son named Nicholas. Some things never change!

Have you been in a public place where you swear you hear someone calling out your name? You even recognize the voice as someone familiar. Then as you look up or look around, you realize one of three things:

- 1) No one was calling out your name at all; you were hearing things.
- 2) They were calling out your name, but not calling out to you; they were calling out to someone else who shares your name.
- 3) They thought you were someone else, and, once realizing their mistake, looking embarrassed, they keep walking!

Today is the World Day of Prayer for Vocations. Vocations to the ordained ministry. Vocations to the consecrated life. Vocations to sacramental marriage, vocations to an authentic life as a single person in service to the church. Today, I would like to focus on vocations to the consecrated and ordained ministry. Each one of us has received a calling from God. What is God calling YOU to be? Who is God calling you to be? You have to hear, recognize and follow the voice of Jesus.

Jesus often uses shepherd and sheep imagery to refer to you and to me. A bad shepherd is one who is only in it for what profits him personally. If any danger or risk arises, he runs away from the sheep he is hired to protect, exposing the sheep to the danger of attack by wild animals or the risk of being stolen by other humans.

Jesus as the Good Shepherd will never let that happen to us. He is the “gate.” In the time of Jesus, sheep were herded into a pen or cave at night for safety. Most pens or caves had no door to open and close, so the shepherd slept across the opening. If any sheep wandered over his body, he could move it back. If a thief or animal came near, the Good Shepherd would drive them away.

A third aspect of the shepherd/sheep relationship is that sheep, although easily led and misled, usually only move when they hear, recognize and follow the voice of the shepherd assigned to them. When a large group of shepherds gather together while the sheep graze indiscriminately in the field, the sheep mix and mingle with each other. When it is time to leave, all the shepherd has to do is cry out. The sheep that are his instinctively follow his voice and none other. The sheep split into their respective groups and follow only their shepherd. Now THAT is “voice recognition!”

How did I hear the voice of the Lord calling me? When I was about 18 years old and a member of Sweetest Heart of Mary Church in Detroit, the Sisters there – Sisters of St. Joseph, Third Order of St. Francis -- encouraged me to serve as an altar server and a lector at Sunday Mass. Then they thought I might have a vocation to the priesthood and that I should visit the Vocations Director for the Archdiocese of Detroit. I met him downtown at the chancery. He gave me some brochures to look at. I took them with me the next time I went to church.

It was the Feast of Our Lady’s Assumption – August 15, 1975. All the lights of the church had been turned off when Mass was over. I read one of the pamphlets that said, “The Lord speaks sometimes very quietly through a pamphlet or a gentle word, and sometimes the Lord speaks very loudly. So don’t expect to be knocked down like St. Paul.” I was kneeling in a pew as I read this.

What followed could be chalked up to my vivid imagination, a hallucination, or an actual bona fide mystical experience. I looked up at the tabernacle on the main altar and asked, “Well Lord, do you want me?” Just then, all the lights on the main altar went

on. The 840 tracery lightbulbs in the ceiling went on. The side altar lights went on. The Stations of the Cross lights went on. The lights at the top of the pillars went on. I literally jumped up in my pew and scraped my knees on the pew in front of me before landing. I asked, "Is that a maybe?"

Now, most things called "miracles" can be explained. It turns out that one of the SSJ sisters had an out-of-town friend visiting Detroit. She wanted to show her visitor what the church looked like with all the lights on! It was no mere coincidence... I believe it was Divine Providence!

The other mystical experience happened at the other end of my discernment process was when my seminary formation was coming to an end. I and my classmates gathered in a pilgrim prayer circle in the seminary conference room before the start of what would be our last Mass together as we all would go our separate ways to our dioceses and to priesthood ordination. The head priest of the seminary, the rector, warned us not to expect too much on the day of our ordination to the priesthood. He said, "Nothing out of the ordinary will probably happen. It might be a routine Mass, but the Holy Spirit will still be there, even in the calm. Don't anticipate anything spectacular."

That was my attitude as I and Fr. Joe Esper lined up in the back of the Cathedral of the Most Blessed Sacrament on Sunday, May 1, 1982 at 11:00 AM. There were just the two of us to be ordained because we were ordained out of sequence from the class one year ahead of us and the class one year behind us. Cardinal John Dearden, who dedicated this church in February of 1968, ordained me and Fr. Joe. The new Archbishop of Detroit, Edmund Szoka, had taken ill and could not officiate. According to my calculations, I was the last man to be ordained to the diocesan priesthood for Detroit by Cardinal Dearden.

As the assembly stood for the opening hymn, I took a deep breath and looked around me and above me. As the orchestra and choir began the opening hymn, I looked up and saw the ceiling of the cathedral open up from the center. Like two doors on a wooden chest. I saw angels floating in the cloudless sky, singing with the choir.

After the Liturgy of the Word came the Rite of Priesthood Ordination. Fr. Joe and I sat on separate chairs near the end of the sanctuary floor, and Cardinal Dearden sat in

front of the Altar of Sacrifice. Although the light in the cathedral was very bright, when Cardinal Dearden began to read his instruction/homily, all the lights went black. There were only three spotlights that appeared, shining on the Cardinal, on Joe and on me.

The third mystical experience happened when I went up and knelt before the cardinal to receive the chalice and paten. The English words translate as “imitate these.” The original Latin words were much more profound: “Become these.” May your priestly life become like bread that is broken in sacrifice and like wine that is outpoured in service.” I heard the voice of the Lord that day! I recognized the voice of the Good Shepherd calling me to diocesan priesthood!

Some of my friends in the priesthood and the religious life have shared that they have had no similar experiences as dramatic as mine. My response is that sometimes the Lord needs to kick someone from behind with more force to get their attention!

Every religious vocation – including yours – needs to be discovered, uncovered and open to growth and change. The early Church learned that and continues to learn. And so do we. Ask the Lord. Ask our Blessed Mother. “What do YOU want me to be?” “Who do YOU want me to be?” Listen. They will tell you! ALLELUIA AND AMEN!

[Readings: Acts 6:1-7; Psalm 33; 1 Peter 2:4-9; John 14:1-12]

Growing up in the Zukowski family, there were two sources of wisdom and knowledge: Dad and Mom. As the years go on, the memory dims, but it seems that whenever we asked Mom a question about faith or life, she always had an answer for us. Maybe not the most theological, but always the most practical. Whenever we asked Dad a question, sometimes, HIS response was: "Go ask your mother!"

We all want answers, and it would be great if things were spelled out for us. But that isn't very often how it goes.

- What questions about my faith, and the way things are, trouble me the most?
- What definition of who Jesus is makes the most sense to me?
- Do I feel chosen and precious in the sight of God, as Saint Paul describes?
- In what ways do I do the works that Jesus did? What more can/should I do?

On this Mother's Day, and this Fifth Sunday of Easter, today's Mass readings provide us with initial answers to these questions.

In our First Reading, we see that in the first decades of the Early Church, as the early Christian community grew, various needs and even conflicts sometimes called for a redefinition and restructuring of ministries. Because of this adaptation to cultural needs, "The word of God continued to spread, and the number of the disciples in Jerusalem increased greatly;" I had to chuckle when I read the next line, "Even a large number of priests were becoming obedient to the faith." Isn't it great to have priests who are obedient to the faith?!"

The role of father and mother in today's culture does not look like the roles of 100 years ago. But the basic mission of parents is there: for fathers to provide, to protect and to give witness by their personal life; for mothers to give life, to nurture and to create. And for both father and mother to lead and to inspire their children by their example of faith. Good parents – good mothers and fathers -- are indispensable for a healthy society and a healthy family life.

Sadly, the present reality is that 61% of all births in our country are to unmarried women. This makes the challenge of parenting even more dependent on the help of God, on the help of the Holy Family and on the wisdom and experience of our Universal Mother, the Church.

The Good News is that however the family finds itself, the possibility is there for us to become "living stones," as St. Peter says in today's Second Reading. "Let yourselves be built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."

However healthy or dysfunctional family life has been or is, whatever blessings or mistakes have happened, they become the brick and mortar that form the foundation of our homes and become part of the living Kingdom of God already here on earth.

Our Gospel shows us the process of finding answers to our questions about life and about faith. We are presented with some of the most moving, inspiring words of John's Gospel. I have turned to these words in some of the darker days and moments of my own life.

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. You have faith in God, have faith also in me."

The answers to our questions are revealed when Jesus Christ tells us that this life isn't all that there is. That our priorities point to Heaven and to eternity, and not simply to human existence on earth.

Both Thomas and Philip need more information to process this. Their questions are not those of doubt and uncertainty. They are pleas for a deeper understanding that will lead to a deeper faith. Jesus Christ IS "the way, and the truth and the life." Jesus and His Father ARE one, along with that sometimes elusive Holy Spirit. The answer to all of our deepest questions are answered in faith and in works. In words and in actions.

We thank God for the way our mothers did and continue to provide answers for us. We forgive our mothers who need forgiving, and who somehow fell short or fall short of their sacred identity and sacred mission. We lift up in prayer those mothers who have lost children, regardless of age, or who wanted to have children but could not.

We thank God for those women in our lives who reveal the love, the devotion and the sacrifice of a mother, who showers us with the grace of their love, their wisdom and their experience. We thank God for Mary, the Mother of Jesus, for loving all of us without exception as her adopted sons and daughters. We thank God for Holy Mother, the Church, who brings us sacramental life and grace, who guides us in good times and in bad, and who will be with us faithfully until the end of the ages. So, I ask you:

- What questions about your faith, and the way things are, trouble you the most?
- What definition of who Jesus is makes the most sense to you?
- Do you feel chosen and precious in the sight of God, as Saint Paul describes?
- In what ways do you do the works that Jesus did? What more can/should you do?

Now, go, and ask your mother! ALLELUIA and AMEN!

[Readings: Acts 8:5-8, 14-17; Psalm 66; 1 Peter 3:15-18; John 14:15-21]

The following story is used as an illustration, and NOT as a statement of a present reality. The story goes that a pastor who had been at his parish several years announced that the bishop was planning to transfer him soon to another parish. After the initial gasp in the congregation, some women and children began sobbing, and a few men wiped tears from their eyes. "Now, now," the pastor said, consoling his people, "I'm sure the next pastor the bishop sends here will be even better than I was." Someone shouted from the back of the church, "That's what they said the last time, and then we got YOU!"

You and I are now at the same place where Jesus and His Apostles are in today's Gospel. Between Jesus' departure from this earth and His return in glory at the Second Coming. What does this pastor, Jesus, say to his people when he is still with them but will be leaving them shortly? Jesus chooses His words and His advice carefully. What's the first thing He says in today's excerpt from His farewell speech? "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments." What were HIS commandments? Love God. Love others. Love yourself. So simple to say. So difficult to live out.

I heard recently on a family-oriented situation comedy, "The Middle," after a disastrous vacation to Disney World, the narrator says, "Why can't my family be perfect like all those other perfect families? Then I realized, there IS no 'perfect family.' We give the best of what we have to each other and we give the worst. We learn to say, 'I'm sorry,' and 'I forgive you.'" The Church is the same way.

Why aren't we getting it? We lament about how so many people are choosing the Culture of Death over the Culture of Life. They still don't get the message that Jesus came to bring. You and I are not selling the product convincingly enough to attract people to the Gospel, to the Church, to St. Martin's. Why is this? Do we believe what we profess? And do we put it into action so powerfully that others see our faith and want to imitate it?

I have found over the years that the Number One Reason people who are welcomed, baptized and received into the Catholic Church at the Great Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday evening is simple. They say, "I want what you have." They have seen our Catholic faith in action, our relationship with Jesus Christ, and they want to share in that themselves. Do we need a helper, an advocate, like those Apostles upon whom the Holy Spirit has not yet descended? Jesus uses a curious word here.

Some scholars translate the word as "Advocate." In Latin, it means, "to speak for someone, to plea on one's behalf." Literally, in Greek, it means, "to call alongside."

When do you and I call someone to be alongside us? When we are running a relay. When we are playing "Tag." When we want someone to accompany us. To walk alongside us

when we go to the doctor for The News or to the hospital for The Procedure. To the funeral home to make arrangements, or as in the case of a husband and wife, to walk alongside each other down the aisle on their wedding day and on their entire married lives together.

Alisa Hope Wagner once said, "The Holy Spirit is like the wind. It can be gentle enough to stroke a leaf but hard enough to bend a tree."

How is the Holy Spirit working in your lives right now? Is it a gentle breeze or a powerful force? The Apostles and the disciples are fruitful in their ministry because they have someone alongside of them, in addition to the Holy Spirit. They have each other. We have each other here at St. Martin de Porres Parish.

As your pastor I can tell you that although our numbers slowly are getting smaller, I have seen great spiritual progress in so many of you. We are becoming that "leaner, meaner church" that Pope Benedict XVI once spoke about. Not "meaner" in the sense of being mean, but "meaner" in the sense of becoming spiritually stronger, more fit. Now we need to figure out how to be an evangelical Church, as Pope Francis is challenging us to be. How to be what the new catch words are: intentional, joyful, missionary disciples. That's your new job title and your new mission: you and I are to become intentional – we freely choose to and want to do it; joyful – we are happy to do it; missionary – we are called to get out of bed, get off the couch, get off the pews and work; disciples – students, learners, realizing that we still have so much to learn and to do.

At the time of Jesus, a "paraclete" was a legal assistant, a courtroom advocate. Jesus is telling us that the Holy Spirit is OUR legal assistant Who speaks up for us when we are falsely accused, judged or wrongly condemned.

When I was in grade school and the good Dominican Sisters talked about "the Paraclete," my creative imagination conjured up those two little pieces of metal that you put on the heels of your shoes in order to make a clicking sound while you tap-danced. Because they were, a "pair a cleats." So, every time Sister would mention The Paraclete, I expected her to break out in a tap dance: "Five, six, seven, eight!..."

Jesus calls that Spirit, the Paraclete, the "Spirit of Truth." God always knows the truth about us, despite what people think of us and the wrong things they say about us. Jesus does promise to be with us. He says, "I will not abandon you. I will not leave you orphaned. I am with you." We have that "Advocate," that "Paraclete," that legal assistant Whom we can call to be alongside us.

St. Peter gives us a word of encouragement in today's Second Reading: "Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts. Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a



reason for your hope.” Be ready and be prepared to defend your Catholic faith. I think that’s what makes us different from this world. We have light and truth and hope. The world has only darkness and lies and despair. The choice seems so easy, doesn’t it? The Evil One makes the darkness and the lies very attractive and tempting. But they are still lies.

And when we debate with those who would challenge our beliefs, St. Peter says to “do it with gentleness and reverence, keeping your conscience clear.” We don’t resort to personal attacks. We don’t call names or use labels. We debate the issue objectively. We discuss the issue with charity. Don’t ever be ashamed of defending the truth.

If someone were to ask you "What is the Holy Spirit?", what would be an answer you could give them that would open the reality of the Spirit for them? What (or who) is the Holy Spirit for you?

The Letter of Peter says, "It is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil." Where in your life have you had to change your behavior, make a difficult choice, or renounce something you desired because of your faith in God? To what good did these sacrifices lead?

The world may have some pretty convincing attorneys and legal advocates on its side. In fact, two local celebrity lawyers are battling between themselves in court! But we have God on our side. We are baptized and most of us are confirmed and strengthened by the Eucharist. We don’t have to wait any longer nor do we need to be afraid. Case closed. Court dismissed. ALLELUIA! And AMEN!

[Readings: Acts 1:1-11; Psalm 47; Eph 1:17-23; Matt 28: 16-20]

Now is the time for our Catholic Services Appeal for this year. By now, everyone should have received their CSA packet through the mail. You have been reading in my column all the particulars of this year's campaign.

There are just a couple of things I want to highlight.

1) Last year's parish target for St. Martin de Porres, set not by me or by the Parish Finance Council but by the Archbishop and his advisors, was \$78,444. Thanks to your overwhelming generous response, we reached and exceeded that goal by \$13,000! This year's goal, \$91,038, is 16% higher than last year's, but it matches how much we received last year in pledges and gifts. We can do this! Please prayerfully consider increasing your gift from last year.

2) You also can make your gift or pledge electronically, but please do NOT use your parish offertory direct deposit link. You need to go to the special site on our website: <http://smdeporres.aodcsa.org>. Please view the C. S. A. video at aod.org which has segments that feature our parish nurse and parishioners. It moved me to increase my support. May it move you to support this worthy cause generously, and to "open doors to encounter Christ!"

THANK YOU AND GOD BLESS YOU FOR YOUR RESPONSIBLE STEWARDSHIP!

The older we get, the more we lose the familiar, the safe. The old neighborhood in which we lived and grew, especially if we lived in Detroit, is gone or unrecognizable. How many jobs have we had in our lifetime? Who among our loved ones have been taken from us by death? How do we survive after the breakup of a relationship? It's all a matter of time. It's about time.

How do we know what time it is? The clock on the wall gives us one answer. Then the moment passes, and we're obliged to look again for a new answer shortly. The deeper understanding of what time it is comes from *context*—which is hardly written on the wall.

Context tells us whether it's the beginning, middle, or end of a relationship, for example. It tells us whether it's time to stay or go, to listen or speak, to agree

or object, to reap or sow. This deeper sense of time requires our full attention, some experience, and not a little wisdom.

The context Jesus uses faithfully during his ministry for telling time is *prayer*. Notice how often he goes aside to pray in some lonely place. See how he takes his closest friends up a mountain, or into a grove of trees, to pray with him. This sense of timing allows Jesus to know when it's the hour to slip away from those prepared to kill him -- as he did in Nazareth at the synagogue where he delivered his unpopular address to the hometown community. Attention to context also lets Jesus know when it's time to deliver himself to the mob coming to get him -- as he does in Gethsemane soon after his final supper with his friends. No first-century sundial was ever going to deliver that information.

Jesus shows a keen sense of the time, hour by hour. When to have a private dinner with a Pharisee, and when to foil another in a public debate. Still more: when to recruit a high-profile Pharisee to become his apostle to the Gentiles. Sometimes Jesus openly taught multitudes of strangers, and at other times instructed his small circle of friends. At times Jesus worked to exhaustion, and at others he urged his friends to "come away and rest."

There was never a one-size-fits-all approach to delivering the gospel. Sometimes it was important to jot and tittle every letter of the law. Later that same day, an opportunity might arise where the law was an obstacle to an even greater fidelity.

Jesus realized that now was the time to return to the Father. When the disciples asked Jesus, "Is this the right time to restore the Kingdom to Israel?" Jesus must have thought, "Father, if I don't leave now, I'm gonna KILL these people!" And listen to how Matthew accurately, painfully and yet briefly, summarizes the Ascension experience in today's Gospel: "The eleven disciples saw Jesus. They worshiped, but they doubted."

Note that this is the very last time they are going to see Jesus Christ in the flesh, and they couldn't even give Him the benefit of their total understanding and support. But are you and I any different? We come here to worship every Sunday, but do we not also come with our own doubts?

Yes Jesus is not me, Jesus is not us. He is much more kind, loving, forgiving and understanding. He reminds His followers that the promised Holy Spirit will come upon them soon to give them what St. Paul prays for the people of Ephesus and for all of us in our Second Reading: a spirit of wisdom and revelation, knowledge, enlightenment and hope.

In the meantime, the disciples – and we – are commissioned, missioned, sent to “go and make disciples.” That is the call to evangelization. This is the word we have been hearing in the Archdiocese and in our parish for three years. We are to make disciples, to baptize and to teach, savoring and cherishing His final words to us: Know that I am with you always, until the end of the age.”

Today is World Communications Day. This year, Our Holy Father, Pope Francis has called each one of us “communicators,” and asks “communicators” to deliver a message of hope and trust in a season of fear and uncertainty.

Above all, he’s asked us to offer a radically fresh context: to teach hope and trust *in history itself*. History’s legacy is often painted as bleak and broken, a tragedy of errors. People of faith are affirmed in our belief that God has rescued history and turned it into a story of salvation. We take the events of history and see them through the lens of faith and time.

This is the true answer to the question: What time is it? Now is the hour that God comes to save us. ALLELUIA AND AMEN!

[Readings: Isaiah 57:13-19; Psalm 85; Colossians 3:12-15; John 14:23-29]

Memorial Day is a day of remembrance for all those who have died in the service of the United States of America either during their military service or as veterans. Memorial Day was borne out of the Civil War, it was officially proclaimed on May 5th, 1868 by General John Logan. Originally, it was known as "Decoration Day", when freed slaves would decorate the graves of Union soldiers, who had given their lives in defense of the principle that no one should enslave another human being. That principle continues to need defending, in light of human trafficking, laws that discriminate, and the clashes between warring factions.

If you have had the opportunity to visit the Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Virginia, you had the chance to see all those grave sites of those who have given of themselves to protect our country. I had the honor of visiting my uncle's grave at an American Military Cemetery in France when I was studying in Europe. I also visited the American Military Cemetery near Monte Casino in Italy. What struck me were the rows and rows of thousands of simple white marble crosses lined up like the soldiers they represented. A second impact was that on the same hill of Monte Casino, located in all directions around the base, were the Italian Military Cemetery, the German Military Cemetery and the Polish Military Cemetery. Each with their own national flags, military headstones and losses.

I would like to share with you an editorial written in Our Sunday Visitor, a respected Catholic periodical, a week ago. It makes some good points.

When Catholics in the United States celebrate Memorial Day this year, they will do so in the wake of the quintessential intersection between our religious and civic lives. Our President, Donald Trump, met last week with our Holy Father, Pope Francis.

My comments: the president's visit had what I consider to be a profound itinerary that marks the start of the path to any true and lasting peace.

He began in the Middle East, challenging over 50 Muslim political leaders to remove from their midst all radicals and all terrorists from their religious houses of worship, from their communities and from their countries.

The President then went to Israel, where he met with Jews and Palestinians and spoke of the need for mutual respect and security. He met with Pope Francis, where he commented that more than ever, he is dedicated to seeking and preserving peace in our world. He concluded with a visit to NATO headquarters, where he scolded most of the member countries for not paying their fair share for worldwide military forces and defenses.

Back to the OSV editorial: As citizens, we can be tempted to gawk at an unfolding spectacle of day to day American politics. Conversely, we can be tempted to tune out the stream of oftentimes-surreal information in our media. We can be tempted to apathy, cynicism or even despair. We can be tempted to obsess over every last tweetable detail in real time, turning our political discourse, which has already been warped into a soap opera, into a kind of drug. That comparison alone should indicate this is not a healthy approach.

Turning to the Church, we find a wise reminder of the responsibilities of a person of faith in civic life in the U.S. bishops' "Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship" document. The bishops note that the Church's teaching has an intrinsically public element:

"At the center of these truths is respect for the dignity of every person. This is the core of Catholic moral and social teaching. Because we are people of both faith and reason, it is appropriate and necessary for us to bring this essential truth about human life and dignity to the public square."

We have a duty to go into the public square and stay engaged. As for how we do that, this is where Pope Francis' days before the Trump meeting became instructive. The pope spent that time on two resoundingly fruitful foreign trips -- to Egypt in April and Portugal in May.

In Egypt, we saw Pope Francis help bring healing and solidarity in the wake of violence, and to call leaders to overcome old differences and to a deeper

responsibility. In Portugal he reminded us that we are all one, embedded in the providence of a loving God, and looked after by his mother.

The editorial continues: We may not travel with our own plane and the media pool, the world hanging on every word, but Catholics -- and all people of good will -- can live out good citizenship in the public square like Pope Francis does: willing to look at old problems with a fresh perspective, not shying from trouble, vulnerable to being challenged, and calling others to accountability where there is clear injustice, even danger, and remembering that there is always something bigger and more powerful than us. This is what our military personnel fought for, died for, and continue to live for, bearing the scars of war and hatred.

These simple prescriptions require courage to live them out in our current political reality. On this Memorial Day, it becomes clear that the least we can do is strive to consistently live out the values we're free and fortunate enough to have, because those who came before us exercised even greater courage and sacrificed much more to give us those freedoms. To shy away from defense of the common good and solidarity with our neighbors is to squander that sacrifice.

Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. May they rest in peace. May their souls, the souls of all our beloved military dead, and the souls of survivors of war and violence, through the mercy of God, rest and be at peace. AMEN!

*Many of these comments are taken from a recent editorial in Our Sunday Visitor magazine. Editorial Board: Greg Willits, editorial director; Gretchen R. Crowe, editor-in-chief; Don Clemmer, managing editor*