

[Readings: Mass for Various Needs, #30 for Peace and Justice
Isaiah 57:15-19; Psalm 85; Colossians 3: 12-15; John 14:23-29]

I would like to share with you this reflection from the Editorial Board of the Our Sunday Newsweekly internet site:

Memorial Day also is an invitation for Americans of all faith backgrounds to step with compassion and gratitude into the suffering of other's people's lives

For Catholics, the observance of Memorial Day echoes and combines elements of secular and religious observances half a year away, in November — Veterans Day on Nov. 11, All Saints' Day on Nov. 1 and All Souls' Day on Nov. 2. As in the former, we honor members of our armed forces. As in the Catholic feasts of early November, our focus is on those who have died — in this case, while serving their country.

In a time when medical technology has driven down the number of war casualties, and such casualties no longer reach indiscriminately into every city block as they would have during conflicts of centuries past, Memorial Day also is an invitation for Americans of all faith backgrounds to step with compassion and gratitude into the suffering of other's people's lives.

Families who directly are touched on Memorial Day have made a sacrifice that cuts to their core and is almost unimaginable in the abstract — the sacrifice of a young person, someone they loved and nurtured at every stage of his or her existence, the sacrifice of the joy and the bright future that life embodied in that family. All of it violently snuffed out.

Then there are the deeper values and truths undergirding this sacrifice — the deep love of country that calls a young person to choose service in the armed forces; the belief that decency, freedom and human rights are worth promoting and defending; the belief that evil really exists in the world and requires us to respond with goodness. These all hold a place in the memories of the people we honor on Memorial Day, and they should inform the hearts of all of us who have

the responsibility of living our lives in the peace and freedom for which they sacrificed.

And here the Church has provided a witness on how we can honor these sacrifices, a witness attuned to “signs of the times” that include the destructive capacity of modern weaponry. Pope St. John XXIII wrote in his 1963 encyclical *Pacem in Terris* that “it no longer makes sense to maintain that war is a fit instrument with which to repair the violation of justice.” His successor, Pope St. Paul VI, put a finer point on it in the famous entreaty in his 1965 address to the United Nations: “War, never again war!”

Working to end conflicts rather than stir them up and to promote true and lasting peace among nations is a daunting task. And while Christians can do much to promote nonviolence in our thoughts and actions toward others, as well as advocate for peace and diplomacy in our world, ultimately it all rises to prayer.

So together this Memorial Day, as we remember with gratitude those who sacrificed their lives, we join in this prayer for Memorial Day (“Catholic Household Blessings and Prayer,” USCCB Publishing): “God of power and mercy, you destroy war and put down earthly pride. Banish violence from our midst and wipe away our tears. ... Keep in your mercy those men and women who have died in the cause of freedom and bring them safely into your kingdom of justice and peace.”

At Military Funeral Honors, the song Taps is played while the American flag is held over the casket of the deceased. The distinctive bugle melody played originated during the Civil War and started out as “Extinguish Lights” – the official call to bed time on military bases until 1891. During taps, veterans should stand at attention, and civilians should place their right hand over their hearts. Did you know there were words for Taps? “Taps” is a bugle call - a signal, not a song. As such, there is no associated lyric. Many bugle calls had words associated with them as a mnemonic device but these are not lyrics. A man named Horace Lorenzo Trim wrote a set of words intended to accompany the music.

Here they are:

Universal Prayer of the Faithful

Priest: Let us pray for our brothers and sisters as they go forth with courage and determination to face the forces of violence, weapons of destruction and hearts filled with hate.

RESPONSE: LORD, HEAR OUR PRAYER.

Deacon or Reader:

For our President, Congress, Supreme Court and our political and military leaders that they may tirelessly seek peaceful settlements to international disputes; we pray to the Lord:

That the Lord may preserve the members of our Army, Navy, Marines, Coast Guard and Air Force from all harm; we pray to the Lord:

That even in war, we may keep clearly before us the defense of all human rights, especially the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness; we pray to the Lord:

That the families, relatives and friends of our military members may be strengthened in this time of concern and anxiety; we pray to the Lord:

That the Lord may help families with men and women in the armed forces to cope with daily challenges in the absence of their loved ones; we pray to the Lord:

That our homeland will be preserved from violence and terrorism and that the nations of the world will seek to work together in harmony and peace; we pray to the Lord:

That the hearts of all men and women will be moved to pursue true peace and justice; we pray to the Lord:

That violence may be overcome by peace; that weapons of destruction may be transformed into tools of justice, and that hate may give way to true charity; we pray to the Lord:

That grateful for and inspired by those veterans who have given their lives for our country we may bravely face the challenges ahead, and for all who have died, including those we are remembering at this liturgy; we pray to the Lord:

For the special needs we mention in the silence of our hearts (pause), we pray to the Lord.

Priest: Lord God, Almighty Father,
creator of mankind and author of peace,
as we are ever mindful of the cost paid for the liberty we possess.
we ask you to bless the members of our armed forces.
Give them courage, hope and strength.
May they ever experience your firm support, gentle love and compassionate healing.
Be their power and protector, leading them from darkness to light.
To you be all glory, honor and praise, now and forever.
Amen.