
Memorial Day: Remembering those we often forget

**An article from the *Cathedral Times*
by Canon Carolynne Williams**

According to news commentator and Episcopalian Jon Meacham, less than one-half of one percent of Americans serve on active duty in our combined armed forces. I was shocked at the number.

Our armed forces and the families of those serving are huge, in my mind. My personal knowledge of the young women and men who serve in the military today and those veterans of years past is limited. My father, who died in 1999 at the age of 95, was not a war veteran. He was too young to serve in World War I and the maximum age to enter the service by the time that World War II and the Korean War were upon us. I have no brothers.

My spouse is a Vietnam veteran and served as a medic in the Navy, attached to the Marine Corp. When we discuss death and dying, which is not often, our views about living and dying are somehow different. His sense of humor is great when it comes to such subjects, while I am more stoic, though I have adjusted to his candor.

The veterans through the history of these United States deserve, at least, a moment of silence in prayer of thanksgiving and a nod in recognition of the wars in which they served, fought and, in many cases, died. The latter is the supreme sacrifice for freedom and democracy. In the words of Civil War General John A. Logan, "We should guard their graves with sacred vigilance."

Those who are serving today are remembered in the prayers of the people within our Episcopal liturgy, which is prayed corporately every Sunday. Our daily Holy Eucharist includes our prayers for those who are serving in the armed forces and their families.

How will you remember our veterans on this Memorial Day? Is this just another long weekend for you? Is this weekend just another opportunity to tap your touch screen to download a coupon for a great sale? Don't misunderstand me. I share in that exercise as well.

I believe that when we look into the eyes of those who have served our country and we have the opportunity to talk with them, we should seize the moment. There is pride and stability that is represented in those men and women. There is a respect that yearns to be shown in the midst of our glossing over the humanness of their experience. In our hurriedness, we have a tendency to forget.

So on this Memorial Day, in the midst of our long weekend of sleeping in, shopping, rounds of golf, beach trips and finishing those last three books, all of which are wonderful and fun things to do and be a part of, let us pause for a minute or two to recall, reflect, and remember those who have protected the borders of this great nation and its place in the world.

Have a good Memorial Day.

The Reverend Canon Carolynne G. Williams

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