

Homily for the Memorial Day Field Mass

May 28, 2018

**Calvary Cemetery
Springfield, Illinois**

**† Most Reverend Thomas John Paprocki
Bishop of Springfield in Illinois**

Reverend Fathers and Deacons, consecrated men and women, esteemed members of the military, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ, it is good that we are here to celebrate our annual Memorial Day Field Mass.

For many, Memorial Day means the beginning of summer. To others, it is a day off to go shopping. But as those of you gathered here know, the real meaning of Memorial Day is to honor those who have died in the service of this country.

The word “memorial” comes from the Latin word “*memorare*,” which means “to remember.” So Memorial Day is a day set aside to remember the men and women who have died serving these United States, in order that you and I might live with greater security, justice, and peace.

Just as we ask God to grant eternal rest to the souls of those who gave everything, even their lives, in the service of our country, we ask our Lord to give us the grace to give everything that we have to serve Him.

Just a few moments ago in our Gospel we heard the familiar story of the rich young man who asked our Lord what he must do to inherit eternal life. Our Lord began naming the commandments, to which the young man replied that he had indeed kept the commandments his entire life. Then our Lord challenged the young man to go one step further, to sell all that he had and give the proceeds to the poor, then come follow Him. We are told that the young man went away sad, for he had many possessions.

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, if we are to be disciples of the Lord, we must not hold anything back; rather, we must follow the example of the disciples who have gone before us as well as that of the brave men and women who protect and defend our country. Let us ever strive to give all that we have and all that we are to the Lord, so that we might build up His kingdom here on earth and one day inherit eternal life.

As I was preparing my homily for this occasion, I came across a hymn entitled *Mansions of the Lord*, which was written for the 2002 film *We Were Soldiers* and later used at the funeral of the late president Ronald Reagan. I feel that the hymn expresses our prayers today for those who gave their lives in military service, and goes like this:

Mansions of the Lord
Text: Randall Wallace
Tune: Nick Glennie-Smith

To fallen soldiers let us sing
Where no rockets fly, nor bullets wing
Our broken brothers let us bring
To the Mansions of the Lord

No more bleeding, no more fight
No prayers pleading through the night
Just divine embrace, Eternal light
In the Mansions of the Lord

Where no mothers cry and no children weep
We will stand and guard though the angels sleep
All through the ages safely keep
The Mansions of the Lord

V. Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord.

R. And let perpetual light shine upon them.

V. May their souls and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace.

R. Amen.

May God give us this grace. Amen.