

**Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio, J.C.D.**  
32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Memorial Mass  
17 May 2026



This morning I celebrated the Baccalaureate Mass at the Naval Academy and in a month will do the same for the Merchant Marine Academy. Last Monday I met two high school seniors one on his way to West Point and the other to the Air Force Academy. At the end of April, I celebrated the commissioning Mass for all of the ROTC seniors in the Washington Military District. In all of the instances you can find elements of the Ascension message: mission, sending forth, and memory.

If anything brings us to this magnificent basilica this afternoon it is to render homage to men and women who have accepted and accomplished a mission. We honor the men and women who have so faithfully served our country. We pray for their eternal rest and we highlight the service of so many priests who have completed their pilgrimage. We pray that all might enjoy the eternal rest of heaven.

What motivated their acceptance of this mission to protect our way of life, our Constitution, and those God-given inalienable rights? No doubt the motives are many, but the commitment to an ever-grateful nation is common. This perfect prayer unites us in begging the reward for their labors and perhaps recommits us to those common bonds that unite us, even when our approach to problems might differ.

At the Ascension Jesus gave a clear mission to His Apostles and to the Church for all time: "Go...and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." That mission is common to all believers, but it cannot always be freely undertaken.

In some parts of the world, evangelization is restricted, conversion illegal. In others belief is ridiculed, secularism dominates, or the Gospel is smothered by materialism. Still there are many signs that the mission continues. The number of conversions in this country, in France, in Great Britain, and in missionary lands never ceases to surprise us. We should be confident in our mission just as those we honor today were confident in theirs.

A look at our inheritance is clear in St. Paul's invitation to the community of faith in Ephesus. "You may know what is the hope that belongs to His call, what are the riches of glory in His inheritance among the holy ones." St. Paul, the great missionary, contemplates the marvelous design of God and expresses the hope that the faithful might receive a spirit of wisdom and revelation—to understand and meditate the mysteries of God. Is that not so useful for us in these challenging days? We strive for the fullness of life. There is no more reason to fear! Christ is with us always as He tells the disciples in the Gospel passage.

The Ascension points out that Christ is Lord, and absolutely everything is under His sovereign dominion. He gave that to the Church as head over all. It is His Body. Christ, Head of the universe, has given the Church the essential mission to be His visible body. Therefore, the Church has a double mission: fill herself completely with Christ, to become the fullness of Christ; and for those who do not belong to the Church, to be the visible means by which Christ acts in the world.

The Ascension, which is not a mystery of separation, but of a deeper presence, marks the end of the final AP course for the Apostles about their mission and the legacy that Jesus Christ gives them. We should be encouraged by the fact that they still did not understand. After three years of being with Him, the incredible experience of His passion, death, and Resurrection, and forty intense days with the Risen Lord, they are still looking for a temporal solution, the overturn of the Romans, and the restoration of Solomon's kingdom.

They were being sent forth for something quite different. Ten of those eleven would shed their blood as the price for their fidelity. They would be exiled, turned out of the synagogues, ridiculed by the learned elite, and oftentimes strangers. However, their message would reach to the ends of the earth.

The sending forth is also a reality of military life. Everyone knows PCS. Most people end up with unexpected tasks, a different occupation, and other opportunities. For eighteen years I have kept a suitcase ready and am ever on the road to visit my flock around the world. On Thursday thousands of uniformed men and women will descend on Lourdes to pray for world peace. We are sent forth to foster that dialogue and to pray, as we do in this Marian Shrine, to beg our Mother for an end to the senseless wars that pit children of the same Father against one another.

Most of the military men and women here have known assignments in different parts of the globe. They were also sent forth to protect, defend, and ensure security for those inalienable rights that bind us as a nation.

They put into practice those counsels immortalized by General MacArthur in a famous speech in 1962: "to be proud and unbending in honest failure, but humble and gentle in success; not to substitute words for action; not to seek the path of comfort, but to face the stress and spur of difficulty and challenge; to learn to stand up in the storm, but to have compassion on those who fall; to master yourself before you seek to master others; to have a heart that is clean, a goal that is high; to learn to laugh, yet never forget how to weep; to reach into the future, yet never neglect the past; to be serious, yet never take yourself too seriously;

to be modest so that you will remember the simplicity of true greatness, the open mind of true wisdom, the meekness of true strength.”<sup>1</sup>

You all know that part of our ultimate vocation is sanctity. I am not talking about being listed in the official canon of saints, but rather our goal, our ultimate PCS. We want to be welcomed in heaven. That is the definition of a saint, a dweller in heaven. That is the reason for the mandate that the Lord Jesus gave to the Apostles. That is why we are here and ultimately what we hope to do in our life journey. Our experience, vocation, and daily tasks ultimately constitute the vehicle that leads us into heaven.

The mandate to preach the Gospel is for all of us, but the methodology changes according to our specific vocations. We might seem to be “thin little pencils, but we are held in the hands of the omnipotent artist. We are tiny construction tools used by the great engineer. We are cells in the hands of Christ’s Body [the Church] to do His work on earth.”<sup>2</sup>

Indeed, what is our task this afternoon? As the Archdiocese for the Military Services, USA, together with friends we gather to pray for the eternal rest of those fallen in war and those who served, returned to a routine, and then died of old age or infirmity. Those who carry the wages of war in their bodies, hearts, and minds are also not far from our community prayer. As we pray for them, we do not fail to include the families who have paid the price of service either through loss or illness or have accompanied the Veteran on the uneven road from battle.

Finally, in this perfect prayer we also remember in a special way the priests who served the military or the VA or the foreign service, and have been called back to the Father’s house.

Indeed, ours is the land of the free, because the brave have made their home here, but still, like those who now prepare for active duty or head off to one of the service academies, have never hesitated to leave what is comfortable and endanger themselves to ensure that freedom.

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<sup>1</sup> Douglas MacArthur, Speech at West Point, 12.V.1962.

<sup>2</sup> Peter Kreeft, *Food for the Soul A*, p.366.