

Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio, J.C.D.
VI Sunday of Easter "C"
Annual Memorial Mass
22 May 2022



Just ten days ago representatives from the military of some forty Nations gathered at the famous Marian Shrine in Lourdes, France. They gathered to pray for peace and reconciliation, in search of healing, and to celebrate noble service rendered to their Nations.

My counterpart from Canada, Bishop Scott McCaig made the voyage, but was only able to have a delegation of two. The US Marines stepped up to the plate and carried the Canadian Colors at all of the official acts: opening, Blessed Sacrament and Rosary Processions, Mass at the Grotto, closing Mass and ceremony. It was moving to see this gesture of solidarity and service to our neighbors to the North. It allowed a marked "Canadian" participation in this significant pilgrimage.

Ultimately what we celebrate on this Sixth Sunday of Easter and gathered as an archdiocesan community of faith is a foreshadowing of the New Jerusalem, a prayer for that elusive peace and respect for human dignity—sought also in the early Church, and a special occasion to remember the fallen, pray for the wounded, and give thanks for noble service rendered to the Nation.

In the second reading we hear from the last chapter of the last book of the Bible: the definitive end of all Revelation which offers a symbolic description of the heavenly Jerusalem. The architect and builders of a church in Rome, S. Stefano Rotondo al Celio, tried to put this description in mortar and stone. It is still under renovation and construction! That is a good analogy for any human concept of perfection and completion, even for the greatest works of art. There is always more to be done. There are many attempts to describe the end points of our journey. You and I are charged to make signs of this coming Kingdom evident in our world today and call for its preparation.

The sacred Author attempts to describe the splendid reality at the end of our journey: the heavenly Jerusalem, the bride of the Lamb, the holy city. He uses the elements of its

structure to uncover the deeper reality he is trying to reveal. Three, in particular, are mentioned: the wall, the doors, and its foundation.

This wall offers security, but not isolation, because each side has three doors through which all of the people on earth can enter to form the only people of God to whom is entrusted the revelation. Both the Tribes of Israel and the twelve Apostles are depicted: the Law and the witness upon which the Church is built. All are welcome. The image of completeness is overwhelming.

“These four gates in all four directions...., because they gather in the whole world from its remotest corners. They are “catholic” as in universal, world-wide. The Church does not discriminate between peoples but only between good and evil, light and darkness, Christ and Antichrist. To quote Solzhenitsyn: ‘The line between good and evil does not run between nations or peoples or races or governments; it runs between two halves of every human heart.’”¹

Absence of a temple or chapel is the greatest notion of fullness, because the encounter with God in the heavenly Jerusalem is a sponsal reality, a communion of life. God and the Lamb will be all in all.² You might ask what this description of the heavenly Jerusalem has to do with our gathering this afternoon. Quite simply, everything.

Ultimately, the pilgrimage of human life has heaven as its goal. We are all gifted to open ourselves to heaven and to help others on our journey through this life that passes away. The men and women we honor today gave the best of what they had and who they are in order to offer us security, tranquility, and the ability to pursue our pilgrimage enjoying the freedoms that we hold dear.

That journey is not without conflict and the need for discernment. The first reading recounts the resolution of the first internal challenge in the community of faith. The conflict over whether a gentile, someone not of the Jewish origin, had to pass through Judaism in order to be Christian or not threatened the primitive Church.

The question was resolved by gathering the Apostles and the presbyters in prayer and conversation. It was the First Ecumenical Council and reached a solemn conclusion: “it is the decision of the Holy Spirit and of us”. Christ had told the Apostles that “whoever listens to you listens to me (Lk. 10:16a). As a community of faith we continue to depend on the Apostolic Succession to guide us on our pilgrim way.

Do not miss the essential notion of witness in the prohibition of eating meat sacrificed to idols. St. Paul reminded his hearers that idols are nothing, but even if our neutral actions give scandal, we have the obligation to avoid them, lest we cause those with a more fragile faith to slip. That lesson encourages us to be attentive to the secondary effects of our actions and decisions. It is a good antidote to the assertion of personal rights and the “me” worship that too often characterize our age.

¹ Peter Kreeft, *Food for the Soul*, p. 311.

² Zevini e Cabra, *Lectio Divina*, 4, pp.322-3.

The quest is to keep the word that the Lord Jesus has given us and remain in His love. Then we can enjoy His gift of peace. Love and obedience are one and describe a life lived in Him. Love is the source and foundation of our obedience to the Lord. This beautiful Gospel passage comes from the Farewell Discourse in St. John's Gospel. We are admitted into that intimate moment with Jesus and His chosen band. Yet we still long for that lasting peace. The International Military Pilgrimage this year had as its theme, *dona nobis pacem*. In a Europe where war rages that illusive gift seems so much more desired.

Pope Francis reminded the military: "You are called not only to prevent, manage, or put an end to conflicts, but also to contribute to the construction of an order based on truth, justice, love and freedom, according to the definition of peace by St. John XXIII in his Encyclical *Pacem in terris* (nn.18 ss)." ³

We recognize that authentic peace is much more than the absence of violence, or a situation of "cold war". The dimension of biblical justice is also a part of peace. That indicates being in a "right or balanced relationship in a four-fold way: with God, with self, with others, and with the created world." ⁴

So we gather to pray for the repose of the souls of the priests who have served the Armed Forces, both on active duty and contract and in the Department of Veterans Affairs. We remember all of those service men and women who have died, either in battle, from wounds, or after the normal journey of life. We pray for their loved ones—many left behind and seeking consolation and understanding. We include all of the intentions sent to the archdiocese for this occasion.

Not far from our prayers are also those who still carry in their hearts and bodies the wounds of war. Many came home, but with a spirit overwhelmed with the burdens of experience. Through the generous kindness and organization of the Knights of Columbus, many of them came to Lourdes last week to be embraced by our loving Mother. We continue our prayers for them and our commitment to their healing.

With this perfect prayer we express our deep and abiding gratitude to all of those who served and serve. This opportunity is precious, because giving thanks is important. Commitment is honored and we pray that it might also be imitated in future generations. Commitment to something beyond ourselves is fundamental to military service and to many other professions. May the fidelity to Country that we honor today inspire our personal commitment in life.

The Marines bearing the Canadian flag touched the hearts of many in the US Delegation. Once more, it was the right thing to do to lend a hand to a neighbor in need. "Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him." (Jn. 14:23).

³ Pope Francis, Discourse to Military and Police Forces, 30.IV.16.

⁴ Daniel H. Mueggenborg, *Come Follow Me C*, p. 89.