

Remembering those who gave us our freedoms

By Paul Viggiano

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Remembering those who paid the ultimate price to ensure our liberties may be the most significant individual and corporate action in which a culture can engage. With sacred vigilance we ought to protect our minds from their natural inclination to forget. Memorializing with gratitude is a quest that requires discipline.

Waving flags and erected monuments remind us of what brave soldiers did and the necessity of their sacrifice to make this nation great. Freedom, similar to health, is a precious commodity. And like health, it can easily be taken for granted, at least until we're afflicted by the infirmities of bondage.

For almost 150 years Americans have set aside a day to remember those who would not countenance the notion of oppression and captivity. They are the physicians of our freedom. But unlike our family doctors, they don't merely write a prescription. These heroes are themselves crushed in the medicine bowl of conflict and poured out for us to drink as a bitter-sweet elixir in our celebrations.

While traveling through a communist country, my aide was openly speaking his political mind in a public venue. My translator told me that I needed to advise my aide to keep his voice down. He assumed he could simply say whatever he wished. When Americans travel abroad, we begin to recognize what a unique country this is. And the blessings of this country did not come without a price. So let us remember who put the money on the table.

Simple things, like the freedom to enjoy the park or the beach should sweep our minds to our fallen liberators. We can read the books we wish, travel where we wish, eat where and whatever we desire, go to movies, plays, speeches, churches, parades, sporting events, all for the mere expense of the event. We tend to think that if we can afford something we have a right to it, and we do. But that right came at a price. It is not always the case in this world that if you can afford the book you're allowed to buy it, or that if you can afford to travel you can go where you please.

Remembering sacrifice is the hallmark of any great nation or kingdom. It is not without cause that the hub of the Christian faith is the Lord's Supper, where Jesus calls all Christendom to take and eat "in remembrance" of Him. Sacrifice is the premier principle of love. "Greater love has no man than this" Jesus taught, "than to lay down his life for his friends." Our friends have died for us. Even as I type these words, recognizing they will be read by thousands, I know this is a luxury given to me by friends who have died. I can only hope that the words I write and life I live somehow reflects gratitude for those who have loved me greater than I have loved anybody.

Today we remember our heroes with our flags, posters, parades, picnics and parties. We thank their families who continue in their pride and pain. Freedom is an expensive wine and it should be sipped with appreciation. Let us be thankful that God continues to raise up warriors who care enough to fight and die for us. May we all live in a manner that will honor the sacrifices made to grant us the liberties we all enjoy.

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