

## Year B – 32<sup>nd</sup> Sunday

Concord. Bunker Hill. Saratoga. Yorktown. Bull Run. Vicksburgh. Petersburg. Gettysburgh. Belleau Wood. The Arrgone Forrest. Pearl Harbor. Bataan. Guadalcanal. Midway. Iwo Jima. North Africa. Sicily. Italy. Normandy. Bastogne. Berlin. Pusan. Inchon. Seoul. The Chosin Reservoir. Danang. Saigon. Kabul. Kandahar. Mosul. Baghdad. I know you are expecting a homily and not a geography or history lesson. Each of these places was where American service men and women have fought and given their lives in defense of our freedom and the freedom of millions of people around the world.

This Wednesday we will celebrate another Veterans Day. This one day a year was set aside after the end of World War I to recognize the sacrifice of those who died. On the 11<sup>th</sup> hour of the 11<sup>th</sup> day of the 11<sup>th</sup> month the guns fell silent. It was to be the war to end all wars. We know how that ideal has turned into wishful thinking.

I want to take a moment now to ask any service men or women, past and present, to please stand and be recognized for their service.

Over the 200 plus years of our history millions of men and women have served in the armed services. As always happens in war many have also died. They have made the ultimate sacrifice for us. Of those who have died some have been recognized for the extraordinary bravery they exhibited. They have been awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor. Recently, the Capitol region was in the news when Henry Johnson, an Albany native, was awarded the Medal of Honor for his service in World War 1. There is a book, Above and Beyond, that lists those who

had received the Medal and a sampling of their stories. Between the Civil War and 1973 3,400 men and women had been awarded this same Medal. Each Medal has its own story and real life person behind it. We know that since 1973, unfortunately, additional Medals have been awarded. When you believe in something very deeply you are willing to place your life on the line for others.

Last weekend we celebrated the Feast of All Saints. When we think of saints we think of those individuals named by the Church for the holy life they led. The Feast day is really about all those who have lived over the nearly 2,000 years of our Church history who led lives that would lead us to believe that they have been taken into heaven by God. Here we are talking about millions of people. Just like the Federal government The Church has over the years identified people that have led lives that have had a special degree of holiness and commitment to the Catholic faith to lead us to conclude that there would be no question that they merited life in heaven with God. Today, one of the marks of their holiness is miracles that are attributed to prayers for intercession directed to them. They also have a book about them, the Book of Saints. Just like the Medal of Honor numbers increasing, so also for the number of named Saints.

Picture yourself seated with Jesus outside the treasury. You're seeing the different people come and make their offering for Temple support. Jesus makes a point to contrast the gift from surplus wealth of most to the small amount given by the widow. Jesus remarks that she has given her whole livelihood. We can begin a discussion about the bad effects of wealth on people, but Jesus is never about appearances. Jesus is talking about commitment. The widow was someone who believed so deeply and trusted God so completely that she was able to give

everything that she had. Those who gave from their surplus wealth did not share her commitment and instead chose to hold back something just in case that God was not there for them.

Like the widow we know that God is always there for us. If we were ever unsure or had doubts about this all we need do is look at Jesus. We can easily recall that Jesus gave his life on the cross for us. Jesus also did something else before that which is truly amazing. He became one of us, a human being. Here is Jesus, the Son of God, who was with God the Father in the creation of everything that exists, being born of a human mother. Jesus, the Son of God, now experiences everything that makes us human: he had to learn how to walk and talk; he had to grow and mature into a young man with all the challenges that entailed; he had to learn a trade to support himself and his parents; he knew what it was like to go hungry and be tired; he was tempted to turn away from God and make himself the center of his universe (a pretty simple definition of sin); he faced people who were at best skeptical of what he taught and at worse were actively hostile to him; he was betrayed by one of his inner circle of friends and deserted by others. Yes it is truly amazing that the Son of God would even want to consider being human.

We know from the Gospels that Jesus was determined to spread the message that God loves each of us unconditionally and that we should return God's love. Jesus tells us to love God and love our neighbor. Jesus shows us by his cross that he was fully committed to living a human life full of love of God and neighbor. Just as the widow gave her whole livelihood into the treasury,

so Jesus gave all he had, his life, for us. The widow had trusting faith in God's mercy, and Jesus knew the mercy of the God whom he loved.

Each of us has been baptized into Jesus' life, death and resurrection. Just as Jesus lived a human life and trusted in God's love and mercy, we also live with God's love and mercy. We may never reach the level of being a named saint in the Church, but we are called to live lives that are holy. Holiness does not merely mean following a set of rules, but showing our love for God and our love for our neighbor. Many service men and women gave their lives for the freedom of others. The named saints dedicated their lives, and some were martyred, for the faith they believed. The widow in the Gospel gave her whole livelihood. Jesus gave his life. What or how much are we willing to give? The answer is for each of us to decide.