



Homily – Memorial Day 2011ⁱ

*The Most Rev. José H. Gomez
Archbishop of Los Angeles*

*Santa Clara Cemetery
Oxnard, California
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My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

In the Gospel we have just heard this morning, our Lord Jesus Christ tells us:
“I have said these things to you, so that when their hour comes you may remember that I told you.”

These words are very fitting for this Memorial Day Mass on this beautiful morning.

In this hour this morning we remember Jesus Christ’s promise to send his Holy Spirit of truth among us — to bear witness to him, to keep us from falling away from him.

And we remember in this hour all those who have given their lives to defend the truths that our great nation holds to be self-evident. The truth that all men and women are created equal. The truth that we are all children of one God, endowed by our Creator with inalienable rights — to life, to liberty and to the pursuit of happiness.

The men and women we remember today died defending these truths. They died in fields of war for you and for me — so that we could gather on this sunny morning in peace and in freedom.

We owe them a great debt for their self-sacrifice, for their love.

Jesus said that there is no greater love than to lay down your life for a friend. The men and women we remember today were people of great love.

Memorial Day is a day of remembrance. It is also a day to keep alive the life and memory of so many men and women, who unselfishly gave their lives for our country. They were not thinking about themselves as they went off to fight for their country. They were thinking about their families. They were thinking about the ideals of this country and their duty as faithful citizens.

These brave men and women trusted in God. They made God their refuge and fortress.

And we know that our God is the God of the living. And we know that if we have died with Christ in baptism, so we shall live with him in the resurrection.ⁱⁱ So we ask our good God today raise up in joy all those who have died in our Armed Forces.

We are living in a time, my brothers and sisters, when unfortunately, our nation is at war in several places.

So we also pray for all those men and women who are serving our country and are in harm's way today. We pray for wisdom for our leaders and for integrity for our citizens. We pray for the innocent victims of war. And we pray for a just and lasting peace — for our nation and for every other nation, through the mercy of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Not everyone is called to military service.

But our Christian faith calls each one of us to be “peacemakers,” to help bring harmony, justice and peace to our world.ⁱⁱⁱ

The God we serve is the God of love and peace. Our God calls us to always seek the ways that make for peace.^{iv}

We honor the memory of those who have fallen by trying to live better lives. By trying to be better peacemakers.

Let us honor their memory by trying harder with the grace of God — to love more, to be less selfish. Let us try to give more importance to God and to others than we do to ourselves. Let us resolve each day to try to make life a little better for someone else.

Let us make more time to pray or to do small works of service for someone who is close to us. Let us try with his grace to become people of forgiveness, and to rely more on God's mercy.

These little things make a big difference in the lives of others. And the more we spread peace in our own lives, the more peace is spread in the world.

One more thing, my brothers and sisters. Something that always strikes me on Memorial Day.

Let us remember today that the words we pray before every Holy Communion: “Lord, I am not worthy ...” are the words of faith that a Roman soldier spoke to Jesus in the Gospel.^v

As we remember the faith of those who have died serving our country, let us seek to grow in that same humble faith in Jesus Christ.

We go to the intercession of our Blessed Mother Mary, the Queen of Peace. We are always asking her to intercede for us “now and at the hour of our death.”

Today we ask her for her intercession for our faithful departed and for all of us — that we continue to grow in the love of God and in our desire to serve our brothers and sisters.

ⁱ Readings: Micah 4:1–4; Ps. 91; Acts 16:11–15; John 15:26–16:4.

ⁱⁱ Rom. 6:8.

ⁱⁱⁱ Matt. 5:9; James 3:18.

^{iv} 1 Cor. 7:15; 2 Cor. 13:11; Phil. 4:9.

^v Matt. 8:8; Luke 7:6.