

IN NOMINE JESU

TRUE HOPE IN A FALLEN WORLD

Our homily for this Veteran's Day Service is taken from our inspired readings. Hear again the Word of the Lord:

We do not will all of you to be ignorant, O brothers, concerning the ones who continue to fall asleep, that you all may not continue to be grieved as the rest, the ones who do not continue to have hope (I Thessalonians 4:13).

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ

For centuries sermons have begun and ended with words pronouncing God's grace and peace. Those of you who have attended these Veterans's Day services here over the past few years have heard those blessings before. Grace is the unmerited favor of God that declares you right with Him. Peace is the cessation of struggle against God and your fellow man in the things that are eternal. They are actually given with the declaration of the words drawn directly from Holy Scripture.

Grace and peace are God's proclamation for you this day. He does so that you might have and share true hope in a world fallen far from perfection. That should bring comfort, even on Veterans' Day.

Now, it is true that this day is remembered nationally to give thanks for the sacrifices of all veterans. Even so, the day may also stand as a reminder that the words, "Thank you for your service," may not be enough to bring hope to those who are struggling to recover that which they lost when they left military service. That is why, this day, Scriptures such as these are declared to bring true and lasting hope:

For if we continue to believe that Jesus died and rose, even so the God will lead forth with Him the ones who have fallen asleep through Jesus (I Thessalonians 4:14).

That eternal truth is spoken to bring hope to those who live with the reality that their comrades from times in their lives when they sense that they most had a sense of community – their military years – when their brothers and sisters in arms are passing from this life. When such grieving people are not connected to the Source of hope, the ever narrowing of their fraternal community brings stress. That may lead to feelings and thoughts of hopelessness, helplessness, and worthlessness.

While we veterans were in the military community, for better or worse, we knew that our fellow servicemembers were going

through the same things. We believed that we had those upon whom we could count.

That was most particularly true when we experienced times when we were sure that we, the unwilling, were being led by the incompetent, to do the impossible for the ungrateful (Paraphrase from Konstantin Jirecek). That is why, “Thank you for your service,” or, “We support you, but not the war” rings hollow at times to us, and particularly to those who are despairing of hope. We need to hear that our service has meaning. Remember, we once found hope in the mutual consolation of shared service.

Today, for a significant number of those who served, the hope once found in military fellowship is fast disappearing. Reactions to the loss of those with whom we Veterans often had an intimate sense of community, fraternity, and, yes, family, is reflected in the reporting of major Veterans’ advocacy groups. They have been putting out the results of a recently concluded Veterans’ Affairs Administration study. They have repeatedly written a number, which is now going into your ears – twenty.

Twenty veterans a day, on average, are experiencing such intense thoughts and feelings of hopelessness, helplessness, and

worthlessness that they are ending their own lives. Almost one veteran per hour, every day, is choosing to end the pain caused by lack of grace and hope. Sixty-five percent of those who kill themselves among our veteran population are over fifty years of age. Those who never deployed into combat, yet still served in the U.S. Armed Forces, are in the highest risk group.

Twenty veterans a day need to be reminded of the eternal truth which brings hope. It takes less than twenty seconds to declare. Almost 2,000 years ago, Paul, the Apostle (Sent Ambassador of Jesus the Messiah), spoke to problems such as twenty veterans a day face when he recorded these enduring words:

We do not will all of you to be ignorant, O brothers, concerning the ones who continue to fall asleep, that you all may not continue to be grieved as the rest, the ones who do not continue to have hope (I Thessalonians 4:13).

He is calling the faithful, those who believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God, Who died, and rose from the dead, He is calling you to declare that there is an absolute answer to grieving. He is calling you to community - in the Faith. That means he is calling you to be gathered together regularly - even with people you may not personally like (remember Basic Training and the fools

who goofed up so that you got to participate in group discipline; or that E-5 with a chip on his shoulder; or that new Second Louie who could not find his rear with both his hands?)

The Apostle calls you, brothers. That, we veterans know, means to be individuals joined together into a common bond. He wills that you not be without knowledge of the Truth which brings true grace and hope. Further, his God-breathed words are calling you to invite others (especially those veterans who are disconnected from the community of the Faith) to again join in fellowship. God, through these words, through you, is calling you to hope, hope to share, as He continues to say:

For if we continue to believe that Jesus died and rose, even so the God will lead forth with Him the ones who have fallen asleep through Jesus (I Thessalonians 4:14).

Those are objective facts. They are believed and as they are they bring hope. Our fallen comrades who have died in the Faith of Jesus will be raised again from the dead. The tomb of Jesus, which has recently been re-examined, remains empty. He died to conquer death, and He rose from the dead that you, and your despairing comrades might have eternal life – now, not just after mortal death.

The proclamation of that reality is true grace. For you, and for those who need it so much now, it is truly unmerited. You did, and can do, nothing to earn the gifts of death to death and life to life. You are given, by God, through His Word, true hope in a fallen world. The Word declared already continues to say,

Therefore, all of you continue to comfort one another by these words (I Thessalonians 4:18).

God has brought you here today. He has given you His sure and certain Word of promise. What of those who have not heard, those veterans who are feeling a true loss of community? God is calling you to share His grace and hope with them. He has the answer for those contemplating suicide among our shrinking minority of the U.S. population – those who have served our country at home and abroad.

Today, you are reminded that you are free to invite them to come into the eternal brotherhood of arms on earth – the Church Militant. She is the perfect military unit that allows the broken to stand with the healed. We are being called to stand together in the battles that still rage long after the war has been won. In the Church, the soldiers of the cross –veterans of all stripes will get this – we stand

with our victorious Lord. Under our eternal Commander, joined into a community that stretches into the heavens, we become the willing, led by the Competent One, to do that which is now possible in Christ for the ungrateful and grateful alike.

You are not alone. In Christ, there is true hope in a fallen world. Receive now that which Christ died and rose to bring to you. Hear Him as He continues to unite His Church Militant to His Church Triumphant through His Word of Hope:

The peace which passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus

National Veterans' Day

Psalm 14; Job 14:1-6; I Thessalonians 4:13-18; Matthew 24:15-28
November 11, 2016

Pastor Michael A. Morehouse

Soli Deo Gloria