

Remembering the Sacrifices Made for our Freedoms

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This week, we will pause to reflect on the courage, heroism and selfless sacrifices of our men and women in uniform who gave “the last full measure of devotion” for our country and for our freedom. It always strikes me—when attending a sacred service for those who have so nobly died—how far we are from the bullets and the privations of war. We may stomp our feet and shake off a few snowflakes. They lay in frozen muddy trenches under the relentless blast of shot and shell with no refuge and no shelter from the elements or from the brutal instruments of death.

How did they do it? How did they find the courage to rise up out of their trenches and advance across open fields in the face of enemy fire? How did they keep hope alive when the daily toll on their friends and comrades was so numbingly tragic? Perhaps until we find ourselves in their boots, in their trenches and in their desperate frame of mind, we’ll never know. But the human spirit is capable of rising to great heights when called upon and the tales of individual bravery in war are inspiring on a level we can hardly comprehend.

Why they did it is easier to see. They knew that the future of the human race was at stake. They knew that their children’s happiness, freedom and very lives hung in the balance. Although they faced the daily temptation to yield to fear, to surrender to brute force and to compromise with dictators, they chose instead to lay it all on the line and to put the lives and freedoms of others ahead of their own. They chose to sacrifice their comfort and security for the uncertain hope that they might preserve a nation where human decency and Christian values might prevail.

They took the risks. Some said they could do no other. Some realized that there would be no safety in retreat, no security in compromise. They realized that unless they stepped forward and put their bodies in harm’s way that all mankind would be subject to the brutality and destruction being unleashed across the waters.

And so they stormed the beaches and surged into the strongholds. Many fell and did not live to see the victory. They knew it would be so and still they went bravely forward. We cannot thank them enough. We can only bow our heads in reverence and gratitude.

Today, our challenges are of a different sort. Those seeking to destroy our way of life often do so without bullets, shells or declarations of war. They work quietly from within, undermining our society’s foundations, subverting truth, misleading our children and imposing quietly on us regulations, restrictions, taxation and social pressures just as deadly and harmful as those imposed by martial means on the battlefields of war. Our family structures, our peaceful neighbourhoods, our shared spiritual values and our close-knit communities are being taken captive. The faith our fathers once knew is being mocked in front of our children. The sanctity of our parents’ marriages is being defiled. Patriotism and national pride are derided and the strange lusts of the world are given honour in our institutions of higher learning.

Our fathers, those who gave their lives on the battlefield, would never have accepted this takeover of our society. They would not have quietly allowed their children to be taken captive. They showed us how earnestly we must contend for our nation and for our children's future. They faced bullets and torture. We face only mocking and political correctness. For now. They understood that there is a time to stand before all that is holy is swept away. We must follow their example or one day wear our chains in shame. Let's honour the fallen and let us pledge to do our part to maintain that for which they so nobly gave their lives. Lest we forget.

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