

MEMORIAL DAY

Remembering is an important part of our life. People like to be remembered. It appears to be a part of our psychic. Being remembered for who we are or for what we did is an expression of gratitude. But, equally as important is our need to give thanks to others, - a part of remembering. So, we have special days. We remembered mothers recently. Fathers' Day is coming soon.

And, now, the national observance of Memorial Day is upon us! It is a day that has always had a special meaning (or, meanings) in my life. During my student days, school was out for the summer by Memorial Day. Spring has definitely sprung by this time. Memorial Day provides a big weekend. And, of course, there are the family gatherings, parades, and cookouts.

But, first and foremost, Memorial Day is a time "to remember." It is a time when we visit cemeteries in memory of those who have given us life and whose lives have touched ours and helped make them what they are today. In a special way, we give recognition to those in military service, who gave up their lives in order to preserve ours.

Christians are good at remembering. It is part of our tradition. God has reminded his people throughout the centuries to remember his goodness to them and not to be discouraged. At the Last Supper, Jesus instituted the Eucharist and asked that it be continued in memory of him. Every time that we participate at the celebration of Mass, we remember what it is that the Lord has done for us. Mass is the Memorial of the Lord's Supper.

One of my favorite hymns is, "We remember. We celebrate. We believe." We remember that the Lord was willing to suffer and die in our place, so that He could share his victory over death with us who have come to believe. Our lives are, then, to be the celebration of that very fact, as we, his people, reflect the resurrection. Perhaps, a good ending to the Mass would be "Don't forget." "The Mass is ended. Go in peace. And, don't forget."

Every time that I would leave, following a visit to my parents', either one or both would say in parting, "Don't forget." My response was that I would not. But, what did it mean? Was it that they did not want me to forget to visit them again soon? Or, was it an exhortation not to forget that they were a part of my life, which would have a wider connotation than a simple request for a visit?

There are so many that have been a significant part of my life. That includes my parents, who had me only after they were in their forties. Before I knew what it was to have a brother, he went off to serve in the Second World War to keep me and our nation free. My teachers were a great influence on me. Specific individuals are etched in my mind. There were the customers on my paper route who treated me with respect even though I was only a kid. And, then, there were the neighbors who treated me as one of their own.

Remembering those who have come and gone before us should encourage us to become those that others will want to remember in turn. May our remembering not be relegated to only one day but be for us a way of life. That is the highest tribute that we can give those who have gone before us.