



# ST STEPHEN'S ANGLICAN CHURCH

11856 MAYS CHAPEL RD., TIMONIUM, MD 21093

The 22<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Trinity Season  
Remembrance Sunday November 12, 2017

✠ In The Name of The Father and of The Son  
and of The Holy Ghost. Amen.

The passage selected for the Sermon this morning is taken from the Gospel of St. John:

“Greater love hath no man than this, that  
a man lay down his life for his friends.”  
St. John 15:13

For a few years when the kids were in high school, I had the privilege of teaching at the private school they attended. It was a Boarding School, with an international population of 35%. Those international students came from China, South Korea, Japan, Vietnam, the Eastern Bloc Countries, Russia and the Middle East. The subject was modern European History, but given the Asian representation in the class, I taught it as Modern World History, and especially the interactions between the East and the West.

Those kids were honestly puzzled about America and by extension, our homeland in the United Kingdom. They knew that the wars initiated by their own countries were, without exception, self serving or self enriching endeavors wrought with hate fueled ferocity against their ethnic enemies. Whether land, or resources, or strategic position or just vengeance, there was a simple and understandable reason for the wars.

Their belief was that we must be motivated by the same greed and hatred that animated their

history, and yet, we didn't take land, we didn't take resources, we didn't extract vengeance or practice ethnic cleansing. We even re-built the countries we defeated, leaving them with better lives, and an exposure to the ideals and freedoms we hold dear.

We Americans had to have an angle. We couldn't be that naïve. I taught the kids that they were right, we weren't naïve, and we did have an angle. The angle was simple, that we were heroic. We believed freedom to be a God given right, and that anyone oppressed by the evil intent to deprive them our friends of their freedom, deserved our help, our courage, and the lives of our very best men and women. We believed that we should do for our fellow men what Jesus did for us. To give our lives in sacrifice for the benefit of those in need, even those who did not love us for doing it.

The symbolism of the blood of heroes reaped as the harvest of freedom is reflected by the wearing of poppies in remembrance of the fallen. It is a Tradition which emerged during WWI, inspired by the poppies on the graves at Flanders Field in Belgium. The image of the poppies growing between the whitewashed crosses in the cemetery inspired a Canadian Physician, John McRae, to write the famous poem, and in turn, the poem inspired Moina Michael to write in 1915,

*“We cherish too, the Poppy red  
That grows on fields where valor led,  
It seems to signal to the skies  
That blood of heroes never dies.”*

Ms. Michael began to wear and sell the red poppies in remembrance of our heroes and used the money for the families of those fallen heroes who were in need. A Madame Guerin brought the tradition to France to support the widows of their warriors, and the tradition spread throughout Europe. The VFW took over the remembrance in the US in 1922, and continues it to this day. Indeed the blood of heroes never dies, and our harvest of freedom springs from their sacrifice.

We should always recognize the spiritual precedent that underlies our national and patriotic remembrance. It was the blood of Jesus, courageously shed in the ultimate war against the archetypal evils of sin, death and the devil, that is the basis for our Spiritual freedom. The sacrifice of Jesus, and of the martyrs that have given their own lives to follow Jesus, the Way, the Truth and the Life, are the fertile field from which the flower of our salvation grows.

As patriots, we know that Ms. Michael’s verse, “that the blood of heroes never dies,” means that their sacrifice lives on in the freedoms our generation continues to enjoy. As Christians, we can give thanks that these heroes actually and truly live, and live life perfectly, waiting and praying that we will join them in the light and love of life in Jesus Christ. They don’t live on merely as the spirit of a nation, or the privileges a nation may enjoy. Their life is not symbolic or allegorical. They live in heaven, and they will have Resurrected and perfected bodies. Just as the marks of Jesus’s passion and death became the glory that identified and united Him to the Apostles, the mortal wounds suffered by our heroes will be transformed into their glory as we are reunited with them for eternity.

We give thanks that by the sacrifice of our heroes, we live free from the tyranny of evil men, and more importantly, we give thanks that by Jesus Christ, we will celebrate their sacrifices, united with them in the Resurrection, and enjoying a life that is free from the tyrannies of sadness, sickness, loneliness, hatred, oppression and death, life everlasting secured for us with them by the sacrifice of our Lord and Savior.

Dr McRae’s poem ends with a challenge.

**Take up our quarrel with the foe  
To you, from failing hands, we throw  
The torch: be yours to hold it high  
If ye break faith with us who die,  
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow  
In Flanders fields**

These poppies and this day of Remembrance is for the heroes who gave their lives, but also the reminder to us that we must keep their sacred trust.

We are reminded that in Syria and Afghanistan and Niger and Somalia, and on London streets and New York bike paths, we must still honor their sacrifice by sharing their fight. The fight that is one with heroic and Christ inspired sacrifice.

***In the Name of the Father and of the Son and  
of the Holy Ghost. Amen.***