

Veterans Day

On Veterans Day we give thanks to all men and women who have served in the military, living and deceased. Maybe you honor this day by placing the US flags in a cemetery, attending a military air show or reenactment, or visiting aging retired Veterans? But it is also a perfect occasion for Catholics to engage in purposeful prayer in praise and thanksgiving for our military veterans – for giving their best when they were called upon to serve and protect their country, for the hardships they faced, for the sacrifices they made, for their unselfish service, and for their peace and happiness on earth or in heaven.

Please notice the Red, White, and Blue candles near the US flag at the back of church today. These candles represent the patron saints of the military. (A list of these patron saints is found below.) The white candle you see is for St. Michael the Archangel, because he is an angel whereas the rest were men and women. Please ask for the intercession of the saints today in guarding, healing, and offering peace to our Veterans.



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better expect to deploy. I'm telling you this to that you remember the training you've received here. I have countless airmen who email or call me to tell me "thank you" for preparing them, because they deployed weeks after getting to their first duty station. So remember this week, remember the work you've put in, remember the feeling you have now and why you joined. You're now United States Airmen, and I'm damn proud of each of you."

They then played the national anthem and gave us each our coin. Only weeping followed from the 30 or so men in my Flight.

Then, 10 months later, after I got out of tech school, I was sent to Alaska, to the mighty 354th Fighter Squadron. We were told we were deploying in the Fall; it was April. Come August, we were told it would be the winter. Come winter, we were told that out 22 F-16s were being sent off, 2x2 to be modified to shoot lasers, not bombs. We turned into a training squadron. I never deployed. My friends in our brother unit, the 355th, were A-10 maintainers. They deployed and redeployed. Both of my brothers deployed.

This hung on me for some time, ever after I got out of the military. I mean, I was upset that I never deployed. Rather than play Call of Duty, I played Top Gun; training.

It was something that my father and my father-in-law told me during my service years, though, that expelled this thought from my mind: *"Someone has to guard the base, someone has to keep us safe at home, and I sleep better knowing you're doing that every day."* Genuinely, I'll remember those words for the rest of my life. Truly, those words apply to our lives as Christians.

We sometimes get the false idea that if we don't act radically, we aren't contributing. Or, we get the idea that suffering is the only way to serve. Those can be extreme cases. More often, though, we get vocational envy, where we don't think we're doing as much as a

Veterans Day & The Body of Christ

(excerpt from article by Shaun McAfee which appeared on [Catholic Exchange](#) on November 11, 2014)

"... Within years of honorably serving my country I converted to the Catholic Church. I can't tell you which meant more in the moment: graduating basic training on the 4th of July, or confirmation on Easter Sunday. I've noticed many similarities between the military and the Church since my conversion, many of which have given me a deeper appreciation for the other. One sticks out in particular: the desire to serve, and the familial bonds between families within.

Each soldier joins the military expecting to serve; we know what we have signed up for and are willing to give it all for the cause. We call it "signing the dotted line." I can still remember the expression and words of my drill instructor the day we finished warrior week and were handed our Airman's coin:

"Expect to deploy. Expect it. Expect to go to Afghanistan or Iraq, maybe even Iran if they don't wise up. You might be working on jets, or you might be working in the clinic. I don't care if you're working in finance – you

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priest, those in religious communities, monks, saints, martyrs, etc.

We think that if we don't deploy, we didn't serve. It's a disastrous and restrictive ideology.

The truth is that we all contribute to the service of and the advancement of the Kingdom of God. Truly, the laity alone have the ability to infiltrate the world; the laity are the "boots on the ground."
The Council Fathers of Vatican II put it this way:

Since the laity, in accordance with their state of life, live in the midst of the world and its concerns, they are called by God to exercise their apostolate in the world like heaven, with the ardor of the spirit of Christ.

The significance of the laity doesn't stop there. Vatican II also tells us that the success of the mission of the Church depend on the service of the laity:

As sharers in the role of Christ as priest, prophet, and king, the laity have their work cut out for them in the life and activity of the Church. Their activity is so necessary within the Church communities that without it the apostolate of the pastors is often unable to achieve its full effectiveness. (*Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 10)

Baptism as our commission and graduation:

The laity derive the right and duty to the apostolate from their union with Christ the head; incorporated into Christ's Mystical Body through Baptism and strengthened by the power of the Holy Spirit through Confirmation, they are assigned to the apostolate by the Lord Himself. (AA, 3)

And our uniform is this:

Therefore, take the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the equipment of the gospel of peace; besides all these, taking the shield of faith, with which you can quench all the flaming darts of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. (Eph. 6:13-17, RSV)

The body of Christ is big and there's room for everyone to serve. There are so many ways to serve and endless opportunities.

What I learned, is that my part in the Body of Christ is unique, as is yours. I stopped trying to be like someone else. I stopped envying the vocation of others, their holiness, and even had to stop envying the popularity of other Catholics. To let God do what He wants through me, I simply started realizing that God has big plans for me, and I cannot hold myself up to the saints and other living moguls as if I had to be them in order to be great. God makes me great, not me.

So I'll tell you this: expect to serve; expect it.

Go tell a veteran that you appreciate them; we never tire of this. Happy Veterans Day."



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List of patron saints associated with the military.

- **Saint George:** Soldiers (U.S. Cavalry and Armor)
- **Saint James the Greater:** Knights and Cavalry
- **Martin of Tours:** Soldiers (Infantrymen)
- **Michael the Archangel:** Military; Paratroopers; Policemen
- **Adrian of Nicomedia:** Guards, Soldiers; Arms Dealers
- **Saint Barbara:** Artillerymen, Military Engineers
- **Saint Sebastian:** Soldiers, Infantrymen, Archers, Municipal Police
- **Joan of Arc:** Soldiers
- **Ignatius of Loyola:** Soldiers
- **Our Lady of Mount Carmel:** Sailors
- **Our Lady of Loretto:** Airmen
- **Saint Cecilia:** Bandsmen

Surrounded By Saints

The Historic Church of Saint Patrick, Focus on Saints, November, 2019
Week Two: November 10, 2019

So, we spend our lives striving to be like the saints, by whom we are surrounded at every turn. Is this an insurmountable task? Life can be difficult. "I'm no saint, you know." Last week, we first looked to the Holy Family as exemplars of being what God calls us to be. Here's a short prayer that could be a help.

Prayer to the Holy Family

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph,

I give you my heart and my soul.

Please watch over me

and keep me always free from sin.

Bless my family,

my friends and acquaintances, and all people.

Grant peace to our earth,

and lead us to you in heaven.

(Paraphrased from Saint Joseph Children's Missal, Copyright 1963, 1954)

This week, let us take a look at the left side transept window (the big one with Patrick), the double window to its right, and Mary's altar. First, Patrick. This window, in beautiful stained-glass color, tells the story of Saint Patrick sharing the faith with the natives of Ireland. Of course, the depiction shows him sharing the truth of the Holy Trinity with a three-leaf clover. Imagine the difficulties Patrick faced in his return to Ireland as a former slave, now priest and teacher. Patrick was following God's will in big decisions and in simple realities.

Above this, in the transept window, are the four great saints of Ireland. Imagine the challenges faced and met by Saints Bridget, Columkill, Columba, and Colman! To their immediate right is a double window showing two Doctors of the Church, Saints Gregory and Augustine. (Augustine's mother, St. Monica, prayed constantly for her wayward son. It worked!)

Mary's altar is next for our studying eyes. She is in the center niche, with her hands extended. To her left and right are Saint Agnes and Saint Catherine.

How can we take all of this to heart? In "Gaudete Et Exultate," Pope Francis calls us to use discernment in the big decisions of life and to follow God's will in simple everyday realities.

Surrounded by saints to emulate and study. Until next week.