

Greek Orthodox Metropolis of San Francisco - Reflection for Veteran's Day



Brothers and Sisters in the Lord,

When travel was easier and I was able to traverse our Metropolis, I had the privilege to encounter Veterans in our parishes. These men and women who had served in our Armed Forces, going back to the Second World War, always inspired me for their selfless dedication to our nation. On November 11, we celebrate their service to our nation, no matter which branch of the military they served, no matter how high or low their rank, no matter how great or small their role, whether they enlisted or were drafted. They answered the call of the nation to take up arms in support of the cause of freedom and the values of our society.

As Orthodox Christians, we honor military saints, such as Saint Demetrios the Myrrh-streamer, Saint George the Trophy-bearer, and Saint Theodore the General. These saints, among many others, are usually depicted in their military uniform, holding a shield, a sword, or a spear, recognizing that an important aspect of their lives and their story as saints is connected to their military service. These saints usually were martyrs for refusing to renounce their faith in Christ at time when pagan rulers controlled the military and actively persecuted Christians. These

saints placed their faith in Christ above their duty as soldiers.

As we honor Veterans, we must reflect on their sense of duty, honor, and service. Those who have served in combat situations risked their very lives for us, not because they wanted to receive commendations or awards; they were solely focused on defending our country. Having seen what they have seen, or experienced what they experienced, they often do not want to talk about it, because they do not see the glory in the destruction of warfare. They, above all, prefer to experience peace. They pray for peace more fervently because they know the brutality and devastation that war causes and the scars it leaves behind. We should join them in praying for peaceful times, echoing the words of the prophet Micah who prophesied a time when we shall beat “swords into plowshares,” “spears into pruning hooks,” and “nation shall not lift up sword against nation” (Micah: 3:3-4).

Across our Metropolis, we have clergy who are veterans of the Armed Forces, who served honorably in the military and then pursued a vocation in the Church. Many of our clergy serve as military chaplains, offering liturgical services to Orthodox servicemen and women, as well as spiritual guidance, counsel and religious education at their posts. A few years ago, our Archdiocese published a New Testament specifically designed to meet military regulations for size and appearance, containing Orthodox prayers and icons, so that even as their military service takes them to various parts of the world, they are always armed with the word of our Lord.

My beloved brothers and sisters in the Lord, if you are a veteran of our Armed Forces, we honor and thank you, not only on this day but on every day, for your service. You answered the call of our country, willingly risking your life for our freedom. Let us come together, as one nation under God, praying for peace and for the protection of all those who continue to serve.

May God Bless You and may God Bless America!

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