

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK



THE RISEN SOLDIER...

This Monday we celebrate Memorial Day which is unofficially the start of the Summer Season. The beaches and pools open, there are barbeques and celebrations on this day. But of course, as we all know, Memorial Day is a time for us to remember all those who gave their lives in valiant service to our country in all the wars in her history.

On Memorial Day, there is usually a parade down Forest Avenue in West Brighton. Certainly, it is not a very well attended parade like on Saint Patrick's Day. At this parade, there are veterans of all the recent wars starting with World War II. Some of these veterans can no longer walk but have to ride. But no matter, we cheer them on and remember their dedication.

A couple of months before my father died, I asked him about his service during World War II. Dad served in the Navy and was drafted even before he graduated from high school. He endured a long trip across the Pacific Ocean and became very sea sick. He told me that the only food that he could eat after four days in a wave swept ship was a boiled potato! Arriving in the Philippine Islands in 1944, it was not a very pretty picture. Many of his friends never came back to the USA. Thank God my father did come back and lived to tell us all about what life was like in the service.

We call the men and women of the World War II generation now "The greatest generation." We give them that name because they made heroic sacrifices so that all of us could be free today! It has been said many times that "Freedom is not free." Although these words have become a cliché, they are so very true.

Many of us forget as time goes by what a great country the United States is and how lucky we all are to live in a land where there is freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom from want and finally freedom from fear. We, therefore, owe a debt of gratitude for the men and women who gave of themselves and who died in the cause of liberty in all of America's wars.

Recently, I came upon a poem that was written many years ago by Cardinal Francis Spellman who was the Archbishop of New York from 1939 to 1967. Besides being Archbishop, Cardinal Spellman was the Vicar for the Military Services and in that capacity visited thousands of troops all across the globe in World War II, Korea and Vietnam. Cardinal Spellman's poem was entitled "The Risen Soldier" the poem is about those brave soldiers who died in war.

I quote the last stanza: "I am the risen soldier, though I die, I shall live on and living, still achieve my country's mission-liberty in truth and truth in charity. I am aware God made me for this nobler flight and fight, a higher course than any I had deemed could ever be, and having found my course, whether I ground my plane on the home field, or plunge a flaming banner from the skies, I shall not turn again to petty things, nor change my plan of life till God has sealed my papers with his seal. And if it be my blood should mingle with Christ's His Son's, in this my final missioning, shall I not whisper with my dying breath- Lord, it is sweet to die-as it were good to live, to strive for these United States, which in your wisdom, you have willed should be a beacon to the world, a living shrine of liberty, charity and peace." Happy Memorial Day!

*Sincerely in Christ,
Father Jerome*