

Memorial Day: The Surrender of Soldiers to the Nation

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Memorial Day remembers the deaths of those serving in the United States Armed Forces. Pictured here, a Soldier with the 3d U.S. Infantry Regiment (The Old Guard), guards the Tomb of the Unknowns at Arlington National Cemetery, Va.

To see what local events are planned see the related [Banner Article](#)

SAVANNAH, Ga. (May 22, 2013) -- We celebrate Memorial Day this coming Monday, so with all of the stress we are under from the challenges and uncertainty before us, I truly want everyone to enjoy this long weekend with family and friends. While you are enjoying the weekend I would ask that you take a some time to think about the significance of Memorial Day and consider the following thoughts.

Memorial Day remembers the deaths of those serving in the United States Armed Forces.

Few people will challenge the significance of a Soldier's ultimate sacrifice. All men die, but for the sake of a higher cause the fallen Soldier's life is stripped away. Therefore it seems most people, and rightly so, consider fallen combatants worth honoring because of the untimely nature and violent condition of their deaths.

This kind of sacrifice is noble and praiseworthy, but it doesn't completely capture the honor attributed to our fallen comrades. We see people in other professions give their lives in similar ways. We see this in firefighters and law enforcement, and we often see citizens give their lives in response to the duress of others. But there is something even more honorable in the death of a service member defending his country -- something unique to combatants alone.

In order for a nation to achieve victory in combat, it requires something like a total surrender of its Soldiers. Every part of a combatant's life, except that which belongs to God, must be consciously yielded over to the discretion of the state. Perhaps no one put it better than one Soldier who fought in the trenches of the First World War:

"All that we fear from all kinds of adversity, severally, is collected together in the life of a soldier on active service. Like sickness, it threatens pain and death. Like poverty, it threatens ill lodging, cold, heat, thirst and hunger. Like slavery, it threatens toil, humiliation, injustice, and arbitrary rule. Like exile, it separates you from all you love. Like the gullies, it imprisons you at close quarters with uncongenial companions." (C. S. Lewis: "Why I am not a Pacifist" 1949)

After enduring some of life's most disagreeable circumstances, our fallen service members never emerge in this life to enjoy the fruit of their service. They are surrounded by peril and misery for long periods until the end. In the midst of these overwhelming conditions Soldiers discipline themselves to access a component of human nature: a phenomenon we call Courage.

Indeed, no other discipline can be achieved through the difficult balance of passion and serenity. And though courage is certainly not limited to combatants, nowhere in life do we find greater and more-frequent opportunities to exercise this virtue than on the battlefield; a place where the Soldier has given up every comfort and right to the benefit of the state. Soldiers are afforded the unsavory prospect of refining their courage over and over again -- to the point of death.

For these reasons I think Memorial Day deserves a notable place on our calendar and in our thoughts. No one deserves our honor more than those service members who surrendered their life for their country.

Please remember our fallen comrades with me throughout this long weekend. And as always, please be safe.