

# Christ the Lord Episcopal Church Pinole, CA

The First Sunday after Pentecost: Trinity Sunday

Memorial Weekend: June 30, 2021

“Memorial Day Reflection”

Rev. Dr. Lois Williams

Good Morning, everyone, on this Memorial weekend. Today in our Gospel we have the foundation of our faith so carefully described. “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.” This is the foundation of our faith. Unfortunately, at times these very words have been used to divide people. At times church can become a place that more closely resembles a private club rather than a place of worship. But then we have this: “Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.”

This scripture goes from individual- to world-inclusive. I believe this is an important thing to notice as we approach this born-again scripture. Yes, there is baptism; yes, there is the Holy Spirit and the church; but God in any form is not exclusive. God’s work involves the salvation of the world. It is inclusive.

This is Memorial weekend. This is the weekend we remember those who lost their lives in the service of justice and preserving freedom. No matter their faith belief, they gave their all, sacrificed their lives, so that we may have the lives we have. A place where we are free to study our faith, speak about our beliefs, and honor our Baptismal vows.

God’s work is not exclusive. God’s work involves the salvation of the world. Those brothers and sisters, fathers and mothers, sons and daughters, no matter what you thought of the military action they served in, honored our country. As long as war exists; we will have Memorial Days for those who served.

I don’t know how many of you are aware of what the military regulations and representations are. Many of us have attended ceremonies not fully understanding the meanings, and I thought today I would share them with you. This information is from the

National Guard Association, and is not widely known. I bring this to you for a better understanding of how our faith has influenced our memorial actions to those who have served our country.

\*A United States burial casket flag drapes the casket of deceased veterans to honor the memory of their service to the country. The ceremonial folding and presentation of the flag is a moving tribute of lasting importance to the veteran's family.

The flag is placed on a closed casket so that the union blue field is at the head and over the left shoulder of the deceased. The flag folding ceremony represents the same religious principles on which our country was originally founded. The portion of the flag denoting honor is the canton of blue containing the stars representing the states our veterans served in uniform. The canton field of blue dresses from left to right and is inverted when draped as a pall on a casket of a veteran who has served our country in uniform.

While Public Law 94-344 does not place any significance or meaning to the thirteen folds of the American flag, there are sentiments that have been adopted as tradition by veterans and family members of the veterans of our great nation as they reflect what we recognize about our flag and our country. They give meaning and hope to those family members who have lost a loved one who served in our great nation's military preserving and fighting for our freedoms.

When honoring our veteran deceased, *Taps* is played, then the flag is carefully folded into the symbolic tricornered shape. A properly proportioned flag will fold thirteen times on the triangles, representing the original thirteen colonies with each fold representing a uniqueness of its own. The folded flag is emblematic of the tricornered hat worn by the patriots of the American Revolution. When folded, no red or white stripe is to be evident, leaving only the blue field with stars.

Since there is the separation of church and state, the meaning of the thirteen folds is not formally recognized. But you will see it represents several faith traditions in its presentation and is known among those who are called to present the memorial flags.

You will notice that the honor guard pays meticulous attention to correctly folding the United States of America flag thirteen times.

The **1st fold** of the flag is a symbol of life.

The **2nd fold** is a symbol of the belief in eternal life.

The **3rd fold** is made in honor and remembrance of veterans departing the ranks who gave a portion of their lives to defend our country to attain peace throughout the world.

The **4th fold** represents the weaker nature, for as American citizens trusting in God, it is to Him we turn in times of peace as well as in the time of war for His divine guidance.

The **5th fold** is a tribute to the country, for in the words of Stephen Decatur, 'Our Country, in dealing with other countries, may she always be right; but it is still our country, right or wrong.'

The **6th fold** is for where people's hearts lie. It is with their heart that they pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and the Republic for which it stands, one Nation under God, indivisible, with Liberty and Justice for all.

The **7th fold** is a tribute to its Armed Forces, for it is through the Armed Forces that they protect their country and their flag against all her enemies, whether they be found within or without the boundaries of their republic.

The **8th fold** is a tribute to the one who entered into the valley of the shadow of death, that we might see the light of day.

The **9th fold** is a tribute to womanhood and Mothers. For it has been through their faith, their love, loyalty and devotion that the character of the men and women who have made this country great has been molded.

The **10th fold** is a tribute to the father, for he, too, has given his sons and daughters for the defense of their country since they were first born.

The **11th fold** represents the lower portion of the seal of King David and King Solomon and glorifies, in the Hebrews' eyes, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

The **12th fold** represents an emblem of eternity and glorifies, in the Christians' eyes, God the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit.

The **13th fold**, when the flag is completely folded, with the stars uppermost, reminds us of their Nation's motto, 'In God We Trust.'

After the flag is completely folded and tucked in, it takes on the appearance of a cocked hat; ever reminding us of the soldiers, who served under General George Washington; the sailors and marines, who served under Captain John Paul Jones; who were followed by their comrades and shipmates in the Armed Forces of the United States; preserving for them the rights, privileges and freedoms they enjoy today.

Effective April 17, 2012, the Department of Defense standardized the flag presentation text for military funeral honors ceremonies. The following text is used when presenting the American flag during the funeral service:

'On behalf of the President of the United States, *(the United States Army; the United States Marine Corps; the United States Navy; or the United States Air Force)*, and a grateful Nation, please accept this flag as a symbol of our appreciation for your loved one's honorable and faithful service.' The flag is then presented as a keepsake to the next of kin or an appropriate family member.\*

Let us not forget those who have served and given everything this weekend. Let us pray for those who have given heroic service, from our Book of Common Prayer: (839)

Let us pray:

*O Judge of the nations, we remember before you with grateful hearts the men and women of our country who in the day of decision ventured much for the liberties we now enjoy. Grant that we may not rest until all the people of this land share the benefits of true freedom and gladly accept its disciplines. This we ask in the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen*

\**The Meaning Behind the Thirteen Folds of Old Glory*, Military.com