



TRINITY SUNDAY

May 26, 2024

St. James Catholic Church

*3909 Harrison * Kansas City, Missouri 64110*

Reflection from Steve Nicely

Tomorrow is Memorial Day, a federal holiday when we are supposed to pause and remember our 1.3 million American war dead in 10 wars. That's a lot of dead people. Almost half of them, 620,000, were casualties of our own Civil War when both sides were Americans. World War II had 405,000, World War I, 117,000 and Vietnam, 58,000.

I managed to survive nine years in the Navy, four on active duty and five as a "weekend warrior" spending one weekend a month plus a two-week "summer cruise" each year practicing our military skills. Mine was that of an aviation navigator during 3,000 hours of flying mostly from Midway Island north to the Aleutians and back in radar-equipped planes. We were looking for Russian bombers from Siberia headed toward our west coast. We would alert our defenses to intercept them, but we never saw one, thank God.

There were a few situations when it was questionable whether our flight crew would survive and once whether Marcia and our infant son would survive. That was the Cuban missile Crisis in October, 1962, when our squadron, based at Barber's Point, Hawaii, was alerted to be ready to evacuate to another island in case of a likely nuclear attack. Those orders did not include dependents. Marcia's reaction was, "What about us?" My answer, in effect, was, "I don't know, honey, but I'll have to go." Thank God, it didn't happen.

Then there was the time that I became a Veteran of Foreign Wars during one of those two-week summer cruises. We took a load of tires to Vietnam in a hand-me-down C-118, landed at Da Nang, unloaded quickly and took off six hours later. At our next stop we discovered bullet hole in the tail section. "See there?" I proclaimed. "We are combat veterans." I have friends with Purple Hearts from Vietnam who don't think that's very funny. We did receive hazardous duty pay and Vietnam War service medals.

Fast forward to the present state of our human condition. Are we any closer to peace? Our troops are not involved in the Russia-Ukrainian or Israeli-Hamas wars but still, we are heavily involved with technology and weaponry. More atomic bombs are stockpiled around the world than ever before. It's not hard to imagine Armageddon, that final biblical battle between the forces of good and evil. Pray God, it doesn't happen.

Some of us at St. James went to hear pacifist Fr. John Dear speak when he was in town recently and bought his book, "The Gospel of Peace," highlighting how Jesus was nonviolent to the core. Don't fight. Lay down your arms. And if the Ukrainians did that, would Russia do the same?

I don't know the solution. I suspect it's beyond our capacity at this stage, but it's not beyond us to pray for help. Last Sunday's gathering hymn was a good one when we sang, "Come Lord Jesus, send us your Spirit, renew the face of the earth...Fill us with the fire of your love, burn in us now, bring us together. Come to us, dwell in us, change our lives, oh Lord. Come to us Spirit of God." Yes, pray it happens.