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## PASTORAL LETTER – MAY 2021

Dear friend,

Once again, we are going to pass on the thanks to our fallen patriots.

I am delighted to share that we are going to resume our annual tradition of a joint Memorial Day weekend service with the American Legion Post 429 on May 23 at 11 a.m. Our keynote speaker is going to be fellow member Adam Geuss.

This service is meaningful because it pays tribute to the pre-Revolutionary War heroes buried in our church's cemetery, and because it upholds the virtue ethic of courage. Courage was seen as such an important character trait by Aristotle that he mentioned it as the first virtue in his Golden Mean.

Courage is an important topic in the Bible. Paul, the Apostle, once said, *“God did not give us the spirit of cowardice, God gave us the spirit of power”* (2nd Timothy 1:7). Some translations have *“the spirit of courage and love and self-discipline.”*

Also, three thousand years ago, a young military general named Joshua faced a moment of self-doubt and a dilemma about when to engage in military action. His mentor Moses had just passed away. During an epiphany, Joshua was exhorted by God: *“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.”* (Joshua 1:9)

We all have faced moments of uncertainty. We all have faced moments when we don't know how to act decisively or what direction to take, especially when someone we have relied upon for guidance is no longer with us. Courage gives us the strength to face ourselves and to overcome our fears and self-doubt.

For those of you who love the root meaning of words, it is interesting to note that the word courage derives from the word *cour* in Middle English and in Latin. *Cour*, at its core, means *heart*. In applying this definition to our conversation on courage, we can argue that when we are courageous, we act from our heart and with passion.

We are grateful that our war heroes committed to the American ideal with their hearts. Their courage has blessed us and provided us with a better life. In fact, the world we live in has been enhanced and expanded by their courage. Just think for a moment of the political freedoms that we have in our free society as a result of their courage—freedoms like “freedom of speech.”

Courage is so important as a character builder that the late Senator John McCain was moved to reflect and write about it. He once said in *Why Courage Matters: The Way to a Braver Life* that it is important to teach younger generations about courage so that they “*can do their nearest duty.*”

If we do our “nearest duty,” an idea that derives from social reformer James Freeman Clarke, we will be able to live into the words of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, who said in a poem that *one’s nearest duty provides us with the key that “unlocks the Heavenly gates.”*

We thank God for all the blessings that have come forth from the heavenly gates as a result of our fallen soldiers’ courage.

May their courage and sacred memory inspire us to face the challenges of each day!

Have a blessed Memorial Day!

In Christ,  
Pastor Luis

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