



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF SAN FRANCISCO

ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΑΓΙΟΥ ΦΡΑΓΚΙΣΚΟΥ

Encyclical for Veterans Day 2018

Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Lord,

On Sunday November 11, our nation will celebrate Veterans Day, honoring all living men and women that have served and serve today in all the branches of the military. They courageously serve our nation, ready to answer the call to go into harm's way in foreign lands to defend our nation and its values. I hope that each parish of our Metropolis will find a way to honor those in the parish who have served in the past and serve today so that each member of the community may offer the simple words, "Thank you for your service."

While those in military service are trained for war, they pray for peace more fervently because they know the brutality and destruction that war causes and scars our world. We should join them in praying for peaceful times, echoing the words of the prophet Micah who prophesied a time when we shall beat **"swords into plowshares," "spears into pruning hooks," and "nation shall not lift up sword against nation"** (Micah: 3:3-4). Let us not forget that in many of our liturgical services, we pray for those in the military and ask God to protect all of us from armed invasions.

Our Lord Jesus Christ calls us to be peacemakers, saying, **"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God."** (Matthew 5:9). Saint Gregory of Nyssa says that a peacemaker is one who works to **"cast out hatred and abolish war, to exterminate envy and banish strife, to take away hypocrisy and extinguish from within resentment of injuries smoldering in the heart."** (On the Lord's Prayer and Beatitudes). The saint is challenging us to work at the causes of war itself, the dispositions that dwell within each of us that could lead us to violence. The saint is challenging us to become active in the world as peacemakers so that **"justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an everflowing stream"** (Amos 5:24).

This year, we celebrate Veterans Day on the one hundredth anniversary of the end of World War I. Nearly 20 million people died – military and civilian – in a conflict that lasted four years, and ended in stalemate. In the aftermath, the world was changed dramatically: empires fell, new nations were created. Our ancestral homelands – in Greece, Anatolia and the Balkans – were also dramatically affected, through political upheaval and population exchanges. Our Ecumenical Patriarchate was also affected and today it still lives under conditions imposed at that time. Today, we can trace the origins of many of the world's greatest challenges to that terrible war and its aftermath. In our prayers this Sunday, let us remember those who perished in that "great" war, beseeching Almighty God to give them rest **"in a place of light, in a place of green pasture, in a place of refreshment, from where pain, sorrow, and sighing have fled away."**

May the God of peace and justice guide you always.

With Love in Christ,

✠ GERASIMOS

Metropolitan of San Francisco