

## **MEMORIAL DAY 2023**

by Monsignor Michael Witt

Major General John Logan proposed a Decoration Day, a day when flowers and wreaths would be laid at the graves of our war dead, especially those of the Civil War. The date would be May 30<sup>th</sup>.

General Logan was the head of the Grand Army of the Republic, the forerunner of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War.

While other places claim that they had been the first to honor the war dead, the first national celebration took place May 30, 1868 at Arlington National Cemetery, presided over by General Ulysses S. Grant.

The purpose of Decoration Day, now Memorial Day, is an opportunity for a grateful nation to pray for and to honor those men and women who died in the service of their country.

And now, in the first quarter of our 21<sup>st</sup> century, that opportunity to pray for and to praise carries a further responsibility: to rekindle in the hearts of all Americans what our nation means to us and to the peace and stability of the world.

A recent survey conducted by the University of Chicago found that 38% of Americans surveyed felt patriotism was important to them. Twenty-five years ago that number stood at 70%.

If optimism is expressed in future anticipation of bringing forth a new generation, optimism is today in short supply. Only 30%

of those surveyed felt having children is an important value. A quarter century ago it was 59%.

Our founding Fathers knew that our republic could not survive or prosper without a moral compass and worship of our Creator. Yet today only 39% of surveyed Americans agree with those propositions, down from 62%.

The poisonous acid of self-loathing has infiltrated into our people, young and old. We have been confused by those who tell us that the founding of America was in 1619, when slavery was introduced to the colonies, not 1776 when American patriots risked all for liberty.

What antidote is there to this poison? The answer is what we are doing here today, honoring our fallen heroes, reaffirming the reason they gave their lives. By example and by instruction, we need not surrender our nation's future to cynics and naysayers. These hallowed graves speak eloquently of the legacy of our nation. They challenge this generation to hold these truths as a sacred oath, as a pledge of fealty to the generations who have sacrificed everything.

May God help us in this endeavor!