

Honoring All Our Veterans!

We are celebrating this weekend the 100th anniversary of the end of the First World War. The final Armistice between the Allied countries (including the USA, Great Britain, France) and their opponent, Germany, was signed at Compiègne, France at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month of November, 1918. The Armistice ended the fighting, but the final peace treaty was signed at Versailles, on June 20, 1919. This marked the end of one of the bloodiest wars in the history of mankind. November 11 was a day of great rejoicing, which happened just one year after the apparitions of the Virgin Mary at Fatima.

The First World War originating in Europe was also called the Great War as it involved a large number of countries going much beyond Europe. It involved 70 million military personnel, being one of the largest wars in history. About 16 million people died, including 7 million civilians. My two grandfathers were enlisted in these four years of war, and participated in one of the largest and longest battles that took place at Verdun, the so-called battle of the trenches where it took nearly 10 months for the French troops to defeat the Germans. A total of about 300,000 soldiers died at Verdun. Praise the Lord, my two grandfathers survived Verdun! But one can imagine the suffering my grandmothers went through, being alone with their children, 500 miles away from the battlefield. They were not alone in their sufferings. The whole country of France was in shock.

In 1917, Our Lady of Fatima had predicted the end of the then ongoing Great War, but had warned of the forthcoming Revolution in Russia, and also of the beginning another major war unless we prayed for peace and the reparation of sins. Not only did Communism overtake Russia, but then it spread to other countries, and the humiliation of Germany at the Treaty of Versailles in 1919 led to the resurgence of German nationalism, the emergence of Hitler's dictatorship, and the beginning of the Second World War in 1939. Though there are still many wars going on around the world, we have avoided another devastating third world war. When I visited Nagasaki several years ago, I prayed that it would be the last use of nuclear weapons. . While the bombing of Hiroshima (August 6, 1945) and Nagasaki (three days later) helped end the Second World War, it led several countries (including the Soviet Union, China, and the USA) to build up their own nuclear capacity. Thank God, the then subsequent cold war between the Soviet Union and the USA ended peacefully: the Berlin Wall, built in 1961, was finally opened in November 1989 (then demolished).

I know that many of you are war veterans or have close members of your family who are veterans. The American tradition has been to celebrate Veterans Day on November 11, the anniversary, we honor all the men and women who served (and serve) in the United States Armed Forces and we pray that God continues blessing them and their families.

Our Lady of Fatima insisted that we should pray for **peace** and we should continue to pray daily for **peace in the world!** Our Lady also predicted that the "last" attack by the devil will be an attack on the **family**. The family is the nucleus of the Church, the domestic Church. Let us pray that Our Lady will triumph in this war against the devil. Let us pray that Our Lady will triumph over the current attack on the Church by the devil. And may the Holy Spirit guide each one of us in becoming intentional disciples of Christ and continuing to build up and strengthen His Church on earth!

One in Christ,
Fr. Alain