Local Knights of Columbus and VFW Honor Service and Sacrifice

On an overcast, cool morning, Calvary Cemetery became a place of solemn reflection and profound gratitude as a heartfelt Memorial Day Ceremony brought parishioners and members of the community together. Sponsored by the Knights of Columbus Council 227 with members of the Ithaca VFW Post 961 Color Guard, Worthy Sir Knight Dan Weed presided over the early morning ceremony.



Senior Vice-Commander and Worthy Sir Knight Dan Weed, flanked by members of the Ithaca VFW Post 961 Color Guard, speaks during the annual Memorial Day Ceremony in Calvary Cemetery.



With the American flags placed on all the veterans' graves gently waving in the early morning breeze, attendees gathered in the Queen of Peace Mausoleum to pay their respects. Captain Dan Weed, a retired Navy officer with 30+ years of service, began the ceremony by thanking those assembled and reminded attendees we gather to honor the memory of those who answered a call greater than themselves saying "a Catholic cemetery is not simply a place of burial, but sacred ground and a place of memory, sacrifice, hope and witness. And when our military service members are interred here among the faithful departed, these grounds become something even more profound." After the remembrance prayer and the playing of both the traditional Navy hymn, *Eternal Father, Strong to Save* and the National Anthem, Weed went on to say "as Americans, we honor them. They sacrificed comfort, safety and sometimes life itself so others might live in

freedom; and yet, within a Catholic cemetery, their sacrifice is viewed through another lens as well. The lens of eternity."

Weed reminded those in attendance that Christ Himself said" "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" saying a Catholic cemetery also reminds us of an important distinction. "Military sacrifice, noble as it is, serves an earthly nation; while Christ's sacrifice serves the salvation of the world".

One of the most poignant moments of the ceremony came as Captain Weed said that "the virtues that shape honorable military service, courage, fidelity, discipline, perseverance, obedience, and sacrifice, are also virtues central to the Christian life." "These honorable men and women remind us love requires sacrifice, freedom carries cost, that duty matters, that courage matters, that honor still exists."

As those then gathered around the cemetery's flagpole, there was a quiet hush and silence as the flag was then lowered to half-staff by the VFW Post 961 Color Guard, followed by the playing of *Taps*. After a brief moment of silence to remember all the brave souls who never returned home, Weed concluded his remarks by thanking those for their presence that morning; reminding all the importance of "teaching younger generations that sacrifice is not meaningless, that duty is not outdated, that courage is not obsolete and faith remains the anchor that gives suffering and death their deepest meaning." "We are also reminded that every human life moves toward the same final reality. What remains is the soul before God." "As Catholics, we are called to answer another call of service to Christ; and that faith remains the anchor that gives suffering and death their deepest meaning. Where memory, honor, and resurrection meet not merely beneath the grandeur of our Stars and Stripes, but rather, beneath the shadow of the Cross."





Members of the VFW Post 961 Color Guard lower the flag in a solemn ceremony

The annual Memorial Day Mass of Remembrance was celebrated by Father Chumo immediately after the ceremony. During his homily, Father Chumo said we honor those parishioners who served and are buried in Calvary Cemetery and that "we pray for their souls and to keep all our military who are actively serving safe as well as pray for peace throughout the world."