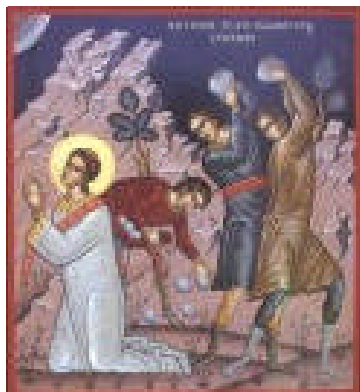




Martyrdom

Written by: A Mighty Arrow



In 1971, Congress declared Memorial Day a national holiday to honor those who paid the ultimate price for the creation, the definition, and, finally, the defense of freedom. To this day, Memorial Day serves as a reminder that freedom is not free.

Recently at a major U.S. airport, a large group of people gathered in a terminal to see people arriving that day. The group was dressed in red, white, and blue; there was also a podium decorated with American flags. Their purpose was simple: to make each American soldier arriving from abroad feel welcomed and appreciated back at home. Each soldier was greeted with applause, a hug, a handshake, and a simple "thank you." One woman shouted repeatedly, "Welcome home soldier," each time a uniformed officer came off the escalator.

Political views aside, it is a very common feeling to honor and respect those who are willing to give the ultimate sacrifice for their country. Our nation's capital is filled with monuments that pay tribute to the men and women who gave their lives for America. The freedom we have as citizens in this country is made possible by the sacrifices of many people. Similarly, the freedom we have as Christians in the Coptic Church is made possible by the sacrifices of countless people.

Many people have given the ultimate sacrifice for their faith over thousands of years, beginning with the first and ultimate sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross, and extending to St. Stephen the first martyr during the first century and even to our modern day martyrs in El-Kosheh. The

hundreds of thousands of Coptics that perished during the era of persecution under the reign of Diocletian were so significant that the Church marked the beginning of the Coptic calendar with this time period. Because of their sacrifices for our faith, we are able to worship in a

Coptic Church today.

It is important to ask, however, whether we properly greet the numerous martyrs of our church. Many of us have attended Divine Liturgy where the reading of the Commemoration of Saints was viewed as a time to rest and sit down. Should not this part of Divine Liturgy be honored and respected as the church recites the names of those who unselfishly devoted their lives for the faith? Furthermore, do we show the saints and martyrs of our church true love from our hearts by calling on them to intercede on our behalf? Many of us have never experienced having a relationship with the saints through intercession.

The Church celebrates its own Memorial Day each day of the year as it relives the accounts of those who paid the ultimate price for the creation, definition, and defense of freedom for our faith.

If, in the case of one human being who has done wrong to another, God in His grace has commanded that we should be forgiving to the offender seventy times seven, how much more will God forgive the person who offers up supplication for his sins?

St. John the Solitary ·