



FROM YOUR PASTOR

September 28, 2020

Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ!

Slava Isusu Christu! Glory to Jesus Christ!

Allow me to say a few words about my father.

I was raised in a very patriotic American home. My father was a staff sergeant in the Army during World War II. He was based in Iceland, where he built runways for the Allied Forces. After the war ended, he worked for the Chrysler Defense Division, where he was an inspector for the building of the M60 army tanks. He was a loyal FDR – JFK Democrat who listened to Yankee baseball games on his small transistor radio in the summer. He was also President of the Board of Trustees at St. Michael's Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Scranton, PA. He died unexpectedly of a massive heart attack on Father's Day, at the age of 71.

At times, I wish he was alive today so that we could talk about events that, as a youngster, I had little or no interest in discussing.

My sister, on the other hand, said that if he was alive today "it would kill him to see how people are destroying our country!"

I think you will agree that it has been a very difficult spring and summer for those who love our country. In Parma, we were not affected by the rioters and protestors that affected so much of our country, except for the brief rioting in Cleveland.

However, I was shocked and disappointed when I read, in the July 12, 2020 issue of the Ukrainian Weekly, a paid advertisement which had been signed by hundreds of American and Canadian Ukrainians in support of the Black Lives Matter movement, which has been responsible for all the turmoil. When I finished reading the article, I decided to write a commentary and submit my thoughts to the editors of the Weekly. With this letter, I would like to share its contents with you.

It's truly heartbreaking to see thousands of demonstrators waving United States flags in Hong Kong at the risk of harsh imprisonment and death. At the same time, we see young people in our cities burning that Flag and refusing to properly honor our National Anthem.

For the last 12 years, I have had the honor and privilege to serve as chaplain of our local Ukrainian American Veterans Post #24. At a recent Post meeting, I was given a 2021 calendar. On the cover you will see a picture that was taken in July of 1943, of soldiers raising the American Flag on an attack transport ship. Take a look at the teenager / young man raising the flag. He probably still didn't shave. We don't know what happened to him but we do know that over 407,000 U.S. soldiers never returned home to their families during World War II – 4 of them from our St. Vladimir parish family.

They paid the supreme sacrifice so that we and millions of people throughout the world could live in freedom. They are rightfully called the "Greatest Generation!"

Two generations later, in many cases, educated young people are attempting to destroy what others have sacrificed their lives for. They are clueless about how fortunate they are. They may have college degrees but, as you can see, education without wisdom can do much harm.

C.S. Lewis wrote *"Education without values, as useful as it is, seems rather to make man a more clever devil."*

The words of the Bible should be taken to heart: *"Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks he is wise in this age, let him become foolish (humble) that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness before God."* (I Corinthians 3:18-19)

Finally, I believe that the first 30 minutes of the movie "Saving Private Ryan", starring Tom Hanks, should be shown to every high school student. Let our youth see the bodies of men a little older than them lying on the beaches of Normandy – sacrificing their lives to save others who they will never meet. Those scenes were repeated many times during the various world conflicts and always with our Flag (that rioters burn today) leading the way. Just maybe that will change peoples' hearts so that they will work to build a better tomorrow rather than destroy everything they touch.

If you wish, please read the attached article – the one I sent to the "Weekly", which has not been printed, and pass it on to others. Please note: It was written in August.

Please come back to Church for Sunday Liturgies. It is a very safe environment.

God Bless You!

- Fr. John