

**Rep. Tom Tangretti**

**Veterans Day Program**

**Greensburg Central Catholic High School**

**Nov. 9, 2001**

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Rev Clergy  
Honorable members  
to the Bench -  
men & S  
Mally - C. Comm Bulya -  
Student & Faculty CC

**"These are the times that try men's souls."**

**"The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot  
will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of  
his country."**

**So wrote Thomas Paine as General George  
Washington fled from the British army after  
suffering repeated defeats.**

**The revolutionary army had dwindled to  
4,000 frozen men.**

**Abigail Adams wrote to her husband John at  
this time, "Posterity who are to reap the**

**blessings will scarcely be able to conceive the hardships and sufferings of their ancestors."**

**The American Revolutionary period is, of course, an interesting period of time in the history of this country, but also of the world.**

**One of the great leaders of that time was John Adams.**

**A biography of Adams by author David McCullough is currently on the New York Times bestseller list.**

**I would encourage anyone who has the chance to read it.**

**As Adams' wife Abigail pointed out, too often we forget what others have sacrificed for us.**

**Listen to how McCullough describes John Adams as Adams heads to France for what**

**became the decisive action in the Revolutionary War -- persuading France to join America as our ally.**

**"Adams was leaving his wife, children, friends, his home, his livelihood, everything he loved.**

**"He was risking his life and that of his small son (he took 10-year-old John Quincy Adams with him), risking his capture and who knew what horrors and indignities as a prisoner, all to begin a new business for which he felt ill-suited, knowing nothing of European politics or diplomacy and unable to speak French.**

**"He had never in his life laid eyes on a king or queen, or the foreign minister of a great power, never set foot in a city of more than 30,000 people."**

**The point of the McCullough's biography is to highlight a case when the courage of an individual reversed the tide of and provide to be right in history, even if it was reviled at the time.**

**When you face tough decisions, the patriots that founded and fought for our nation are great role models.**

**When Nathan Hale was captured, he didn't try to avoid the issue, remain silent or switch sides when the tide turned against him.**

**What would you do in Nathan Hale's situation?**

**Let me remind you what he did.**

**He boldly stated: "I regret that I have but one life to give for my country."**



**Americans love that quote, and I'm sure  
you've heard it before.**

**But we often don't remember the next part.**

**The British then hung him.**

**When you hear *The Star-Spangled Banner*,  
listen closely to the words.**

**It is the War of 1812.**

**The British have burned the new United  
States Capitol and the White House in  
Washington, D.C.**

**They have headed north to Baltimore and  
they are assaulting Fort McHenry in the  
harbor.**

**The bombs burst in air -- can we withstand the British navy – the most powerful navy in the world – once again, or will the recent revolution, fought just 25 years previously, be for nothing?**

**"Oh say does that Star-Spangled Banner yet wave...**

**"O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?"**

**Francis Scott Key had been worried, and when he saw the flag still waving it brought a song to his heart.**

**If you ever get a chance to read or listen to Lincoln's famous address at Gettysburg, take it for it is one of the most remarkable speeches in human history.**

**Listen closely.**

**He's speaking on the bloodiest battlefield of the war, a civil war that has resulted in brother killing brother.**

**But the speech is timeless.**

**Listen closely.**

**It doesn't dwell on the war, or the differences between North and South.**

**Instead, it is about who we are as a nation, and why that nation is worth preserving.**

**It is about what is worth fighting for - not about the fight.**

**On Sunday, America will officially pay tribute to the brave veterans who fought -- not for the glory and fame of war -- but for the freedom of you and me and the values upon which America is rooted.**

**Some wars are more difficult than others.**

**World War II was difficult because America was totally unprepared for war at the time.**

**Vietnam was difficult because the American people were unsure, and divided, about why we were fighting that war.**

**And of course, the current war we are fighting is difficult because for the first time in more than 200 years, our homeland has been attacked and thousands of civilians have died.**

**It is the first war in a long time where we all, as citizens, face the prospect of harm.**

**Before it is over, each of us, in some way, will be called upon to defend America.**

**Think about that for a minute.**

**Will we answer the call when it comes?**

**Of course, most of us will not all have to bear arms, but will we be able to do the things we are called on to do?**

**Will we respond to our brothers and sisters in need, both here and abroad?**

**We will stand up for what America represents, and for the worth and dignity of all human life – even the lives of those who hate us?**

**Will we do what is difficult or what scares us,  
or what is unpopular if we know in our hearts  
that it is the right thing to do?**

**These questions are all questions that have  
been answered with a resounding yes in the  
past.**

**The famous like Adams and Revere, Lincoln  
and Roosevelt, who built and led this nation  
in times of crisis.**

**And the unknown, the nameless foot soldiers  
who stood shoulder to shoulder at Lexington  
and Concord, along Cemetery Ridge at  
Gettysburg and in Iraq during Desert Storm.**

**All of them fought to preserve freedom  
because freedom – theirs, ours and even the  
freedom of others -- meant something to  
them, not because a poll or focus group said**

**it did, but because in their hearts, they knew it did.**

**Today it often seems that principle is based on the latest poll.**

**We hesitate before we act, even when we know we are right.**

**What do other people think about what I do or say?**

**Often, we are taught not to speak out or take action if we might upset someone or bring danger upon ourselves.**

**But what if the hundreds of thousands of northern soldiers during the Civil War who had never seen a slave taken that position?**

**What if the American GIs during World War II, whose friends, families and relatives had never been touched by the horrors of Nazi Germany, had taken that position?**

**And what if we take that position?**

**Even in these times, not many of us will be called upon to sacrifice our lives for freedom, but we will all be asked to sacrifice something.**

**Our courage and character, our patriotism, will be tested.**

**Will we cheat on a test we haven't studied for?**

**Will we shy away when bravery is called for?**



**Will we speak up for a principle, even if it could cost us friends or status?**

**No one likes to take a stand that upsets others; no one likes to do something that is uncomfortable; no one likes to be in the minority.**

**But that is what America is about – standing up for what is right, and fighting for what is right, not because others tell us to, but because we know that it is right.**

**For many of you, these times that we as a nation are going through now must seem like the most difficult ever.**

**The challenges and dangers you and your families and communities face must seem unique.**

**But they are not.**

**Americans have always faced these challenges, and America's soldiers – both those dressed in military uniforms and those dressed like you – have always responded.**

**That is what makes us a unique nation, and a nation that somehow, remains supremely unified in spite of its staggering diversity.**

**The veterans who came before you, both military and civilian, have given you that provenance; it is up to you to give it to the next generation.**

**It is up to you not just to believe what is right, but also to defend what is right.**

**It is up to you not just to show your patriotism, but also to be a patriot.**

**And that means when you are called upon to do more than fly the flag, say the pledge or make a donation – when you are called upon to take a stand, you will do so with the same courage and conviction that those who've gone before you have.**

**Our military veterans fought, and many of them died, so that in this age you would have the opportunity to enjoy all that America offers.**

**And lest we forget, their families, friends and others agreed to sacrifice them, for a time or forever, for that same purpose.**

**If you can do the same, you will be a patriot, and you will be known as a brave soul.**

**Most importantly, you will show what kind of people this nation is made of, and prove once again that there is no evil, there is no terror, there is no discontent and there is no force that can tear apart our unity, shatter our patriotism or break our pride.**

**Thank you.**

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