

**Easter VII (B)**  
**May 24, 2009**

**St. Margaret's, Annapolis**  
**The Rev. Lori M. Lowe**

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our strength and our redeemer.  
*Amen.*

For much of the Christian community, certainly most of the Protestant community, Easter has been over since... well, since Easter Day. But for the Catholic branch of the church of which we are a part – being as we are, both Protestant and Catholic by way of history and tradition – this is still Easter; that is, the season of Easter.

It is, in fact, the Seventh Sunday in Easter; the bridge between Ascension (which was Thursday) and Pentecost (which is next Sunday). You'll remember that Ascension is the day that Jesus ascended to heaven, and that the Church observes this event forty days after Easter. And it was on that occasion that Jesus told his disciples to return to Jerusalem and wait for the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Next Sunday will be ten days from Ascension – altogether 50 days from Easter – thus "pente" or 50 for Pentecost, which by the way, is the second most important feast day in the church calendar; Easter being the first, and Christmas being a late addition.

So today, the Seventh Sunday in Easter is the bridge between Ascension and Pentecost.

This is sufficiently important that I've devoted the opening of my sermon this morning to explaining it. But I am going to exercise my prerogative as a preacher to choose a topic other than those suggested by the lectionary texts, and that topic is Memorial Day.

My father, Billy Felix Lowe, died at the age of 41 (when I was only 18) from a war related illness, making him of course a deceased war veteran. He died on July 2<sup>nd</sup>, and was buried on July 4<sup>th</sup> with full military honors. So you can see how Memorial Day and the Fourth of July are both days of special remembrance for me.

Over the years, I've marked these occasions in various ways; but they are always characterized by remembering... remembrance. Remembrance means: *the state of bearing in mind, and an act of recalling to mind a person or event.* A memorial is *something that keeps remembrance alive*, like flying the flag, declaring a holiday, or celebrating the memory of a loved one now gone from us.

Memorial Day is dedicated to remembering those who died in or as a result of war. We remember with appreciation their offering of themselves for the greater good.

Of course, for many people this is simply a three-day weekend, some extra time off, a good reason to go to a ballgame, a cookout, or a long weekend at the beach.

I suppose we could wonder, though, if such activities properly honor our deceased veterans. But we could ask the same thing about other remembrances, other

memorials that we observe. You know, like dedicating flowers to grandmother at Easter, or lighting a candle for Uncle Jake, or visiting a cemetery on a loved one's birthday. The only difference seems to be whether the remembrance is fun or somber. But where is it written that honoring our loved ones has to always be – or only – be serious.

The point is: how do we honor the memory of someone we love who has died? And why, except for personal reasons, why intentionally remember?

Roberta Bondi was one of my professors back in seminary. Now, seminary professors, especially brilliant ones with ph.d's in such things as systematic theology, are supposed to publish erudite works of obscure material in an effort to impress other professors. Roberta, that is, Professor Bondi, did an oddly un-academic thing.

She wrote several books for ordinary folks like you and me, which are wonderfully thought provoking but also accessible and understandable. Some of her colleagues may have rolled their eyes, but I (and many others) have been delighted.

One of her books was intensely personal (another academic no-no) entitled Memories of God. Having studied with Dr. Bondi and having enjoyed the other two books she had written (To Love and To Pray and To Love as God Loves), I readily jumped into Memories of God, in which she tells her own story.

All along as I read, I assumed that the title referred to her memories of God throughout her childhood and growing up. But at the end, it suddenly became clear: she was talking about God's memories of us!

God REMEMBERS us, Roberta says; that is, God is mindful of us, brings us to mind and thinks of us. And while it is a good thing for us, too, to remember – God holds us, all of us – our war dead, our loved ones lost in any way, and ourselves – in memory, in memorial forever. That's what memorial means: to keep remembrance alive!

And we know in our bones and being that Roberta is right – because if we who are human remember those we love, how much more must God love and remember us!

So we are alive in God's memory. And this doesn't depend on our human capacity to remember. Thank goodness, because it's so easy for us to forget!

But God's capacity to remember is limitless. And do you recall today's gospel? "You will abide in my love," he tells us. That's what "abide" means: to endure, to remain, to continue. Jesus tells us that we can count on God's memory.

Well, I will put out my flag tomorrow... after I sleep late, that is. And then I'll go to my grandson's birthday party. I think my father would like that. However you spend this Memorial Day holiday, may you be blessed by the knowledge that God remembers. God remembers.

Amen.