

HOMILY

In 1940 as events in Europe and the Pacific began to worsen, General George C Marshall saw that the United States was ill prepared to defend our country. Undermanned, under equipped and under trained, by 1941, Marshall had turned a peace-time army into a modern fighting force of over 1 million personnel and made them one of the best trained and equipped armies in the world. The United States was, in no small part because of this build up, a world leader in food production and manufacturing.

After Pearl Harbor, Marshall's insight and preparedness led the Allied Forces to victory over the Axis powers. Marshall is an American hero, who never sought to be recognized or honored in any way for his contributions. It is rare to find any mention of him at all in the history books in our American public schools.

BUT True heroes are never unaware of the cost of their actions. Nor are they unaware of the, often greater costs, of doing nothing.

And the cost of the war was high. Millions of lives were lost and much of Europe was plunged into deep poverty, their cities left in rubble.

Again, Marshall stepped up. He developed a plan of action and Europe was fed, clothed and rebuilt in short order.

Today, the European nations aided by the Marshall Plan are vibrant and America remains free and it can be confidently said that whether it be in peace or in conflict, she is prepared.

Can the same be said of our selves? Advent is a time of preparing for the coming of Christ. However, the celebration of the Birth of Jesus is only a part of this waiting. We also look forward to the second coming of Our Lord and the current coming of His grace and presence in our lives today.

We often think of the martyr as the heroic Christian – and those who willingly died for the faith are indeed heroes of the faith. But that choice, that decision in the moment however is rarely one of sudden conviction. The martyr was ready and willing when called to sacrifice. They were prepared, strengthened by the Sacraments, fortified and forged in God's word and armed with a deep faith.

The heroic Christian prepares and is ready! Ready to spread the Gospel

message knowing full well that there are costs as well as benefits. And the heroic Christian is willing, and able, to live the Gospel message regardless of cost, even the loss of earthly life.

Throughout the Old Testament, God performs great signs and sends his prophets to His people for one central reason, to prepare them for the coming of, Jesus the Christ. Jesus, in turn prepares all the world, even to this day, for the coming of His Kingdom.

Jesus calls us to repentance of our sins, to believe the Gospel and to live it. He has increased our numbers through Baptism and the gift of faith. He has fed us with His own body and blood and most importantly, has already paid the immeasurable cost of our redemption.

Tonight we have the opportunity to become better prepared for His return, to...

as Isaiah says tonight, "Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knee" and to "fear not", as each of us makes a clear way for the Lord so that we might be renewed.

We are asked to recognize this evening that the cost of our sins, either in what we have done, or in what we have failed to do, is high, and we are reminded that it is God who reaches out to save us, who loves us and who will forgive us.