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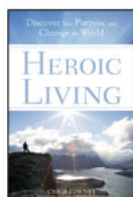
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Why We Celebrate Memorial Day

A Lesson in Service and Sacrifice

by Tom McGrath

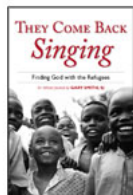
What we remember—and honor—on Memorial Day is heroic sacrifice. We acknowledge those who nobly gave of themselves, even unto death, for a purpose they believed was greater than themselves. Since the days just following the end of the Civil War, Americans have gathered in late May to honor those who died in military service to their country. In the spirit of the day, we can also recall, honor, and pray for all those we know who have lived lives of service and sacrifice for the good of others.



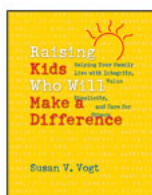
[Read more about living heroically.](#)

Sacrifice is more than suffering

One definition of *sacrifice* is “the destruction or surrender of something for the sake of something else.” Though suffering is always a part of sacrifice to some extent, seeking suffering for its own sake is *not* sacrifice. Sacrifice implies giving up one good for a higher good. For example, a child gives up a day of play to visit an ailing grandparent, or a parent sacrifices watching a favorite television program to help a child who is struggling with homework. Life in the family is full of opportunities for service and sacrifice.



[Read one man's story of service to others.](#)



[Raise your kids to make a difference.](#)

Jesus: the perfect example of sacrifice

What counts in this definition is the phrase “for the sake of something else.” Is that “something else” worthy of the sacrifice we make? True sacrifice is always at the [service of life](http://www.loyolapress.com/living-lives-for-others-catholic-social-teaching.htm) (<http://www.loyolapress.com/living-lives-for-others-catholic-social-teaching.htm>). We learn this from Jesus, who made the ultimate sacrifice and remained faithful through his Passion, death, and Resurrection. Jesus' greater purpose for this sacrifice was our well-being—that we might have life and have it abundantly.



[Reflect on St. Paul's life of love and sacrifice.](#)

This Memorial Day, as we remember all who have served and sacrificed on our behalf, let us not forget what Jesus was willing to give up for us—and the lessons we can learn from that perfect example of sacrifice.



Tom McGrath

Tom McGrath is a spiritual director in the Ignatian tradition, as well as a writer and speaker whose mission is to help people experience a taste of the Divine.

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