

Remembering

A homily preached by Jennifer A. Hudson at the Celtic Eucharist, St. Paul's on the Green Episcopal Church, December 8, 2015

In the name of God: Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer. Amen.

Yesterday was Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day. Yet how many of us can say we actually remember the bombing of Pearl Harbor? Most of us weren't around in 1941, or, if we were, chances are it was as infants or toddlers and remember very little.

I grew up admiring the World War II generation: from the glamour of Hollywood's Golden Era, to the sounds of swing, to the niceties of handwritten letters and greeting people "How do you do?" But more than that, I admired a certain kind of spunkiness evident in my elders who'd grown up during the Depression and went on to serve their country as soldiers, WAVEers, and Rosie the Riveters.

Journalist Tom Brokaw dubbed them the "Greatest Generation." I agree. The WWII flock possesses a unique kind of resilience. It's evident in the fact that many of them are living into their nineties and hundreds today.

Their greatness is also manifest in their vitality. For instance, a visit to my grandmother's native town of Grande-Anse, New Brunswick, introduced me to 94-year-old Mr. Landry, a WWII vet, who drove me—in his brand-new KIA—to see the former site of my great-grandfather's farmhouse. His eyes twinkled as we passed by places familiar to him—including homes of former girlfriends—and he'd tell me about what life was like in those days. Yet, for his nostalgia, he also kept up on current events. He even used an iPad.

My husband's grandmother, whom we affectionately called "Nanny," never missed a party. With a mischievous wink she'd tell me stories of how, in her maiden years, she'd sneak out to go dancing with friends. At age 90, even though the music had changed, she still owned that dance floor!

Individuals like Mr. Landry and Nanny exemplify another model quality about the Greatest Generation—their willingness to adapt, to stay part of the flock.

Fed by necessitated resourcefulness during economic hardship, as well as perseverance in wartime, this generation developed a sense of personal responsibility, civic and family duty, gratitude and zest for life's joys and triumphs, and, most importantly, faith. They didn't stray much from these values. Yet *we've* strayed. We often forget or undervalue these members of our flock, what they've passed on and what they can still give to us, because society tends not to value our more seasoned members. We think the Depression, and WW II, and those who lived through it all are so far removed from us. But, in light of current affairs, are they *really*?

Tonight I offer a challenge: As we wait for God with Us, why not remember God *in* Us? Why not become shepherds of our flock and go in search of our forgotten, undervalued, and unsung members? Not just the Greatest Generation, but Boomers, GenXers and Millennials too. And not just the lost sheep within our families, neighborhoods, or society-at-large, but also right here within in our St. Paul's community. Appreciate the gifts members of the flock bring to the table. Remember them. Re-member them. That, too, is a part of radical welcome, and God will rejoice in seeing our renewed commitment to it.