

Memorial Day Speech

May 25, 2020

Hello everyone and thank you for observing Memorial Day. I am Jason Cilento, Mayor of Dunellen and today, I'd like to recognize our veterans and neighbors during these uncertain and challenging times. Specifically, I'd like to acknowledge how much we've learned from the men and women in our armed forces. They've taught us how to face the challenges of today-- without fear, and with hope.

Memorial Day is an American holiday, observed on the last Monday of May. A day where we honor the men and women who have died while serving in the United States military.

Each year on Memorial Day, Dunellen residents from all walks of life participate in a parade which starts at the American Legion Post 119 and concludes here at Washington Memorial Park. Boys and Girls Scouts, Veterans, service club members, school clubs, and families join to honor our fallen heroes.

Unlike past years, Memorial Day 2020 will be observed in a different way. Of course, the day is still dedicated to the memory of those who fought and died to preserve our nation.

Their sacrifices ensure our liberty---a debt we can only hope to repay by living up to our American values: helping our neighbors, being kind to one another, celebrating our nation's diverse identity, practicing our own ways of worship, and loving our families.

The current crisis that faces our borough, county, state, nation, and our entire world, calls for a reinvented way of reflecting on ourselves and those who fought and died to maintain our very livelihood.

Indeed, the battle lines of history, so vividly represented by the monuments in Dunellen's own Washington Memorial Park, are shifting daily as new categories of heroes emerge.

Alongside the heroic men and women of our Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force and Coast Guard, are front-line fighters against an unseen yet seemingly relentless enemy: COVID19.

These new warriors are the doctors, nurses, police officers, EMTs, fire fighters, hospital orderlies, nursing home personnel, grocery store clerks, government employees, educators, postal-workers and curbside wait-staff. They are women and men who risk their health and lives so the essential services of government and society can carry on.

I am encouraged by the individuals, who remind us that there is a life beyond COVID-19. And just like the soldiers on a battlefield, these heroes remind us that our way of life is worth fighting for.

Although we are living in an uncertain period of our nation's history, we have been faced with worse. Yet, as history has proven, I know we will persevere.

It's true that we have a ways to go before we emerge from our current crisis. Yet, therein lies opportunity. The opportunity to live up to the American standard.

Opportunity often presents itself in the darkest of hours. When circumstances demand an alteration in our behavior, a revolution in our thinking follows.

Over the past few months, I have witnessed selfless acts of courage. I've observed families becoming closer, neighbors looking after neighbors. I've felt a new appreciation for the essential workers who play a crucial role in maintaining our civilization. These acts of kindness and community reflect the very

least we can do, as Americans, to live up to our beloved American values. The very same society, our fallen soldiers fought and continue to fight for.

We are Americans after all and we face adversity head on. And now the most profound lesson of Memorial Day, emerges. As the men and women of our armed forces are a band of brothers and sisters, we, as a people during this time can learn from them, and know that we are strongest when we come together.

The examples of our past can be our solace, today, in knowing that we shall prevail. Those who sacrificed their lives for our freedoms, did so, so we may stand here today, regardless of how dire the circumstances are, to enjoy our freedoms.

Let's be uplifted in knowing that as a community, state, and country, we are all stronger together. Even though at this time, together means, apart. We will come out of this stronger than before.

Let this Memorial Day be a remembrance of how past heroes overcame our enemies, and how their service to country, will be the example of how we, as a determined and united people, can defeat our new and invisible enemy.

God Bless you, God Bless the men and women who sacrificed their lives for our freedoms, and God Bless the United States of America.