

What are you going to do over the Memorial Day weekend?

This weekend is often looked forward to as an opportunity to get away for a long weekend, as the real beginning of summer, or as a day to simply do nothing.

Now more than ever, we need to remember the meaning behind Memorial Day.

We are at war. We are in a constant state of alert and apprehension about potential terrorist attacks on American soil. We are dealing with an enemy like none other we've faced.

In all of this, there is one constant – the men and women of our armed forces who have made the ultimate sacrifice for the freedoms we so often take for granted.

They, along with all who served, are the ones we honor on this particular day every year.

There are many stories as to the origins of Memorial Day. First known as Decoration Day, the holiday was first officially observed on May 30, 1868, with the placement of flowers on the graves of Union and Confederate soldiers at Arlington National Cemetery.

Over the years, it has been observed in different ways – with the wearing of red poppies, the placement of American flags at military cemeteries, parades, or simple moments of reflection.

The manner in which Memorial Day is observed, however, is not as important as the fact that we need to remember the reason for its existence and not allow ourselves to slough it off as a long holiday weekend.

Too many people died for our nation, our principles and our freedom to allow that to happen.

The importance of Memorial Day, nine months after the attacks of September 11, is taking on a new meaning and importance.

Thousands of innocent men, women and children died on that fateful day. Since then, soldiers of several nations have given their own lives in pursuit of those behind the attack.

In a Memorial Day speech given in 1884, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., offered his own answer to those who may ask why we celebrate this day. He said, “it celebrates and solemnly reaffirms from year to year a national act of enthusiasm and faith. It embodies in the most impressive form our belief that to act with enthusiasm and faith is the condition of acting greatly.”

At 11:00 a.m. on Monday, May 27, we will honor those acts of “enthusiasm and faith” in a ceremony at the State Capitol in Jackson. It will be a simple ceremony, but one that will hopefully offer a humble and sincere remembrance of the blood that flows through the foundation of America.

There have been so many sacrifices over the years, and there are many more to come. Such is the nature of the world in which we live, that we must respond to those who would harm our principles, our freedoms, and our people.

Memorial Day is a time to remember. Take some time to thank a veteran, say a prayer for those currently serving, and honor the lives of those who have died for America.