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By Fr. Joseph Ziliak

It was a day of awakening of a great giant. We remember the tragic events of the bombing of Pearl Harbor by the Japanese Empire 70 years ago. The United States declared war immediately following the attack of Dec. 7, 1941.

I lost sleep this past Tuesday night due to staying with a History Channel movie on Pearl Harbor. As a child of five, I have fuzzy memories of that day and the news cast announcing to the nation of the "sneak attack", as it was frequently stated.

Our nation was transformed and galvanized into a massive effort to defend itself and other allied nations in fighting against the Axis powers. I remember collecting newspapers, metal objects, aluminum wrappers, as my brothers and I pulled our little red wagon around the neighborhood. It was all part of the war effort.

The whole nation went onto an austerity program that meant the rationing of items that were everyday purchases: sugar, butter and shortening, shoes, gasoline for autos. We each had our little ration books. Relatives and friends bonded together to share and trade ration stamps to procure items that they needed.

My perceptions are just a miniscule part of the overall effort that are now a matter of historical detail. Yes, I remember our family driving along St. George Road and the hill by the runway that served as a gunnery testing range for the P-47 Thunderbolt made at Republic Aviation on the south side of the roadway.

That "day of infamy" and World War II hurtled the U.S. into a world position from which it could not break loose or deny. The U.S. had become the great world power. Its borders could no longer fence in its concerns and responsibilities. Just as so many young teenagers became heroes in the air, on sea

and land, the young America stepped forward into a call to maturity. The simple life was to be no more.

Similar things happen in our faith life. Events bring great awakenings. Often enough a new awareness comes and moves us to a deeper level of experience, understanding and action.

Christmas is such an event for Christians. Each major religion has its own list of feasts and remembrances. And this is good. We renew the stories. We relive the details. We realize how important the events were, and how significant they still are today.

The hope and prayer is that we, each in our own way and tradition, may be renewed, refreshed and enlivened for the common and general good of all people. Selfishness and selfish deeds will not be held dear, selfless deeds of heroism will prevail.

May we each find ourselves a bit more mature, generous, forgiving, helpful and understanding this year.

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