

ARCHDIOCESE FOR THE MILITARY SERVICES, USA

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Office of the Archbishop

National POW/MIA Day 2010

Dear Friend of our Church and Military,

Last May after the International Military Pilgrimage to Lourdes, I visited the U.S. military installations in Great Britain. While at Croughton Royal Air Force Base, I went to meet the leaders of the Catholic Community at Fairford Royal Air Force Base. The chapel there has a few lovely stain-glass windows. One of them is dedicated to those missing in action and depicts planes flying in the missing-man formation.

The simple elegance of the image reminded me of the suffering of those who await news of their loved ones who are missing in action or prisoners of war. Of course, I did not realize that the window was preparing me for an event a few weeks later.

The family of an officer missing in action since 1972 laid to rest in Arlington National Cemetery the last remnant of his body recovered from the Far East and asked that a Mass be celebrated for the repose of his soul. It marked the end of that longing and waiting which fills the lives of those who long for closure of some kind.

Each year on the third Friday of September, these heroes are officially recognized and honored once again by the Country they have served. In 2010, the **National POW/MIA Recognition Day** falls on September 17th. Permit me to invite you to spend a few more moments in prayer on this day of recognition to include the persons still listed as POW or MIA, and their families. Christians always offer their first gesture of assistance by lifting mind and heart to Almighty God, as I did with that family in the AMS Chapel last June.

Another way to honor POWs and MIAs is with your gift to the Archdiocese for the Military Services. What is the connection? One clear reason is that your help made it possible for me to welcome that family to archdiocesan headquarters. The generosity of benefactors allows me to have an office, a residence, and a chapel so as to fulfill the ministry entrusted to me.

In these days when our Country is at war, our men and women in uniform face the unknown as they go into harm's way. It is important to prepare service members - and their families - in every way possible for the uncertainty. One thing that we have all learned in this current war is the **immense hardship** borne by the families of those repeatedly deployed. What a precious gift it is for them to be strengthened through their faith before they face hardship.

It is not difficult to appreciate what the sacraments mean to someone about to set out on a dangerous mission. Do you and I not have an obligation to ensure that the men and women who defend our precious freedom can have a priest to talk to about their fears, worries, doubts, or anything else on their minds

before a mission? Priest chaplains have often told me that it is vitally important to service members to be able to be there for those who are constantly in harm's way.

In addition to those deployed in harm's way, there are thousands of men and women serving in Korea, Japan, Europe, and in other places where *English-speaking priests are scarce*. You and I can care for them and their families, too. My extensive pastoral visits around the globe this year have confirmed how essential it is to have Catholic chaplains available to these people who cannot drive to the nearest parish. They rely on the Archdiocese for the Military Services. They rely on you.

One way the AMS is directly addressing the *chaplain shortage* is through its ***thriving Vocations Program*** made possible by the generosity of our supporters. The "Seminary Co-Sponsorship" project identifies and encourages men in the military to seek a vocation to the priesthood for the benefit of the entire Church and service thereafter as a chaplain. In recent years 10% of those ordained to the priesthood had prior military service and another 10% came from military families. Today's military provides more vocations to the priesthood for the Catholic Church in America than from any other single source. **That statistic would soar if more priests were in contact with service members.**

In the past two years the number of seminarians from the military enrolled in the AMS "Seminary Co-Sponsorship" project has increased from 7 to 30! They represent our *best hope for the future* and will eventually be chaplains at the service of Catholic men and women in the Armed Forces. **Their ministry is greatly needed and your help makes it all possible.**

Please pray on the 2010 National POW/MIA Recognition Day, and every day, for the service members whose whereabouts are still unknown. Pray for their families. Pray for those working hard to bring closure to the families. Pray that no more service members will face captivity or become "missing in action," and they will all return safely home. **Pray for a lasting and just peace.**

Help me to be there to console families at the conclusion of their ordeal with the consolation of the Prayer of the Church. Please send your financial gift of love and faith to AMS in the enclosed postage-paid envelope. Thank you and may God bless you and your family.

With sentiments of constant gratitude, I remain



Sincerely in Christ,

(Most Reverend) Timothy P. Broglio
Archbishop for the Military Services

P.S. When a service member becomes a POW, they are stripped of nearly everything. They live in fear and untold suffering. But no one can steal their faith.

I pray that you will help this Archdiocese to continue to provide all of its programs of spiritual pastoral care. Please fill out the enclosed card and **return it with your gift today.**