

Learning to be a Soul Friend — The Mission of Suzy Streeter



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In the Kingdom of God, discipleship is never a solo journey. The Church flourishes when its members walk together, sharing burdens and joys. Looking to Jesus' model, Emmaus Journey values accompaniment as essential to Christian friendship and effective apostolic work. Colonel Suzy Streeter (USAF Ret.) embodies this value fully, and her spiritual mentoring is lighting the way for Catholic military personnel.

Suzy's story is one of service — first to her country and now to fellow Catholics in uniform. After a distinguished Air Force career, she turned her attention to a new challenge: helping military Catholics grow as disciples while often isolated from familiar communities. She saw young service members struggling to integrate faith with military life and recognized a gap that traditional chaplaincy normally would not fill.

The challenge was personal, too. Suzy experienced the loneliness of faith on deployment, longing for a “soul friend” who understood both her spiritual and military worlds. She knew how vital it was to have someone walk with you — someone who listens, encourages, and helps you discern God's presence in daily life. Determined to address this need, Suzy enrolled in the University of Dayton's Pastoral Ministry program in 2021. She brought with her decades of military leadership, and a conviction that the answer lay in authentic accompaniment.

Suzy recognized existing spiritual resources for service members were often too generic and disconnected from military realities. What was missing was intentional, one-on-one, mentoring-relationships rooted in trust, shared experience, and faith. She also envisioned a ministry wherein seasoned Catholics would walk alongside newer members, like Jesus walked with the disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13–35), listening to their fears and opening the Scriptures.

By 2023, Suzy partnered with the Archdiocese for the Military Services, USA, and the University of Dayton's Institute for Pastoral Initiatives to launch a mentoring pilot program. She trained experienced Catholic military personnel to be mentors and paired them with junior members. The training focused on active listening, discernment, and practical skills for integrating faith and service — tools that echo Emmaus Journey's commitment to discipleship.

The Military Spiritual Mentoring program launched in August 2023 with 14 participants. By late 2024, it had expanded to include 19 trained mentors from within Colorado Springs parishes and 15 more from military chapels across the U.S. and Europe. Suzy's vision of starting this ministry became a reality with mentors and mentees meeting monthly, sharing stories, and supporting each other through the unique challenges of military life. Mentors report their own spiritual lives deepening, while mentees describe feeling less alone and more resilient.

Suzy's work continues to grow, with new initiatives that connect ministries and apostolates to strengthen support for service members and families. The program now includes both military spouses and VA hospital volunteers. She hopes to recruit senior veterans as local mentor leaders, formalize a spouse mentor ministry, and expand to civilian parishes in military-heavy cities.

Suzy's mission is a testimony to the Emmaus Journey core value of accompaniment: helping others through challenges, out of genuine care. As St. Paul wrote, “We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well . . .” (1 Thessalonians 2:8). This is the Emmaus Journey way: to accompany, encourage, and help each person recognize the Risen Lord in their midst. (To connect with Suzy, you may write her at militaryspiritualmentoring@gmail.com.)

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