HISTORY OF THE CHAPLAINCY

In the history of our country, Catholic priests have served the American armed forces with distinction and valor. Since the creation of the AMS in 1985, and previously through the military vicarates, priests were released from U.S. dioceses and religious communities whose bishops and superiors recognized their collegial responsibility to “Serving Those Who Serve.” The heroic deeds of Catholic military chaplains called to the defense of the Nation comprise one of the most glorious chapters in American Church history. The long list of those who gave their lives in service to God and Country stands as a shining tribute.

While a Catholic military chaplain remains incardinated in his home diocese or religious community, the Archdiocese grants him endorsement and faculties to function as a military priest-chaplain.

MISSION OF THE AMS

The Archdiocese for the Military Services, USA (AMS) was established by Saint John Paul II in 1985 as the only organization responsible for providing the Church’s full range of pastoral ministries and spiritual services to Catholics in the U.S. armed forces.

As the Nation’s only archdiocese without geographical boundaries, the AMS endorses and grants faculties to priests for on-site ministry at more than 220 U.S. military installations in 29 countries and 153 VA Medical Centers throughout the U.S.

CURRENT SITUATION

As aging Catholic priests reach the military’s mandatory retirement age of 62 faster than they can be replaced, our Nation’s armed forces are in growing need of younger men answering God’s call. The number of active-duty chaplains has fallen from more than 400 in 2001 to fewer than 200 today. While Catholic make up about 25% of the U.S. armed forces, Catholic priests currently account for only 8% of military chaplains.

The Co-Sponsored Seminarian Program was set up between the AMS and cooperating U.S. dioceses and religious communities to replenish the ranks of Catholic priests both in the U.S. military and throughout the Church by supporting vocations drawn largely from the armed forces. An annual vocations survey found that nearly 10% of newly ordained U.S. priests have previous military experience and about 25% come from military families, making the AMS the largest single source of American priestly vocations. No wonder! Both the military and the priesthood require many of the same virtues, including valor, discipline and commitment. The commitment obliges us to continue the fostering of vocations and the support of the fine young men studying in the seminary.

Thank you in advance for meeting the commitment.

Sincerely yours in Christ Jesus

The Most Reverend Timothy P. Broglio
Archbishop for the Military Services, USA

MESSAGE FROM THE ARCHBISHOP

Vatican II reminded us all of us that every baptized Catholic is responsible for the transmission of our faith to the next generation. We fulfill that mission by our daily witness of a lived faith in action, our involvement in the area of military chaplains, our spiritual prayers, and our encouragement of vocations to the priesthood, religious life, or consecrated service.

Therefore, we are all vocation promoters! In the Archdiocese for the Military Services we fulfill that role principally by encouraging young people to consider a specific vocation and by the Co-Sponsored Seminarian Program.

Almighty God has blessed this Archdiocese with at least a 10% annual contribution to priestly ordinations in the USA. That statement provides both pride and commitment. The commitment obliges us to continue the fostering of vocations and the support of the fine young men studying in the seminary.

Thank you in advance for meeting the commitment.

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DISCERNMENT AND APPLICATION PROCEDURES:

Step 1: Prayerfully seek the advice of your local pastor or Catholic military chaplain. If you are a seminarian, discuss your interest and discernment regarding the military chaplaincy with your formation directors and bishop or religious superior. Follow their directions.

Step 2: With their permission contact the AMS Director of Vocations. You will then be asked to complete a survey which provides personal, academic, ecclesiastical, and military information about you. The information gathered will be kept confidential. It will be offered to you by the AMS Office of Vocations.

Step 3: Attend one of the two annual vocations retreats sponsored by the AMS. This retreat will give you the opportunity to meet with the AMS Director of Vocations and military priest-chaplains from the different branches of service to learn more about the rewards and challenges of serving both God and your country.

Step 4: If a mutual decision has been made between you and your bishop or religious superior giving you permission to be a Co-Sponsored seminarian chaplain candidate, you will then be invited to apply for the Co-Sponsored Seminarian Program on our website: www.milarch.org/vocations.

ARCHDIOCESE FOR THE MILITARY SERVICES, USA

www.milarch.org/vocations

125 Thomas Circle, NW
Washington, DC 20005

Phone: 202-719-3600
Email: vocations@milarch.org

Father Paul Haliday celebrates a Gold Mass at Fort Lewis, WA.

Father Luke Dundon celebrates a Mass at sea aboard the USS Bonhomme Richard.

“I hold no small hope in you, dear Son, who desired so ardently to look after the spiritual needs of your fellow citizens, that you enlisted in the military services a second time so as to dedicate yourself, even at the risk of your own life, to ensuring that the faithful serving to defend your country might not be deprived of the spiritual food they need to survive.” — Pope Francis to Bishop-elect Chad Zielinski, elected to Fairbanks, 2014

Here I am Lord, send me.

Isaiah 6:8
MILITARY CHAPLAIN'S VOCATION

Military chaplaincy is a "vocation within a vocation." It is a priestly ministry to people in military service to their country. Pope Benedict XVI told an October 22, 2011 international meeting of Military Ordinaries that, "the work of evangelization in the military world calls for a growing assumption of responsibility, so that, in this sphere, there may always be a new, convinced and joyful proclamation of Jesus Christ, the only hope of life and peace for humanity."

As a sacramental minister, the military priest-chaplain brings Christ and the healing presence of the Church to women and men serving in an endless range of stressful, dangerous, and often life-threatening circumstances. He must be prepared to transfer from homeland ministry to ministry in a war zone on a moment's notice and act as a comforter to service members and their families in a way few others will ever experience.

Providing for the spiritual and sacramental needs of men and women in uniform is an essential task, and Catholic military priest-chaplains are in higher demand now than ever before. Christ needs men to answer the call to military priest-chaplaincy to be a voice of comfort to service members and their families in a way few others will ever experience.

WHOM CAN I HELP?

Any single Catholic young man who is a U.S. citizen with college experience who shows signs of having a vocation to priestly ministry is eligible to apply, regardless of race, ethnicity, or gender.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

For men currently in the armed forces, after initial screening by the AMS, the military service member will be put in contact with a local diocesan or religious community participating in the Co-Sponsored Seminarian Program. The candidate must satisfy the vocational, psychological, academic, and spiritual evaluations of the local diocesan or community. This normally requires personal interviews with the local vocation director and members of an admissions board. Upon acceptance, the candidate will attend a seminary with the local vocation director and members of an admissions board. This normally requires personal interviews with the local vocation director and members of an admissions board.