



ARCHDIOCESE FOR THE MILITARY SERVICES, USA
Office of the Archbishop

17 October 2025
Memorial of Saint Ignatius of Antioch, Bishop and Martyr

To the Faithful of the Archdiocese for the Military Services, USA,

Please receive my words to you today as expressions of both gratitude and lament. For those who attend Mass, visit chapel offices, or participate in faith formation on a U.S. Army installation, you likely noticed, that beginning on Sunday, 5 October 2025, contract services and contractor offices were dark and music was absent during Mass. These changes were not due to the government shutdown, but rather, due to a memorandum issued in March of this year by U.S. Army Installation Management Command which directed the cancellation of all chapel contracts for Coordinators of Religious Education (CRE), Catholic Pastoral Life Coordinators (CPLC), and musician contracts, across the U.S. Army.¹

For decades, contracted CREs, CPLCs, and musicians have served the faith communities at military chapels. Their essential services have assisted Catholic priest chaplains in their duties and animated the life of the community. The Archdiocese for the Military Services, USA (AMS), has been especially dependent upon the professional skills and theological training of CREs, who under the guidance of the priest, oversee the daily needs of religious education, coordinate catechist certification training for the thousands of men and women who volunteers as catechists, and ensure that proper materials are prepared and procured. These roles encourage the missionary vocation of lay leaders, sowing the seeds that impart the Catholic faith to future generations.

Over the past several months, I have met with the Secretary of the Army and the Army Chief of Chaplains about the severe, negative impact that the cancellation of these chapel contracts will have on Catholic soldiers serving in the U.S. Army and their families entrusted to my care. Repeatedly, I have been told that Directors of Religious Education (DREs) and Religious Affairs Specialists (RAS) will “cover down” on the tremendous work of CREs and CPLCs. Obviously, that has not happened, and it is, in fact, impossible.

First, there is no requirement for DREs to be Catholic. According to the U.S. Army, merely eight DREs across the entire Army are Catholic. Second, there is no requirement for RASs to have any faith whatsoever, nor is there any specific training for RASs in the Catholic faith, catechesis, or catechetical methodology that would equip them to oversee religious education. Most DREs and RASs do not possess the fundamental qualification of a CRE, CPLC, or catechist, namely, to profess the Catholic faith. To put these individuals in charge of Catholic religious education lacks common sense and is scandalous. The elimination of these contracts reduces ministry outreach and community life to a programmatic task rather than a spiritual life to accompany and nourish.

¹ Lawson, Monica, Col. *Memorandum for Record: Termination of IMCOM RSO Coordinator Contracts*. 12 Mar. 2025.

Engaging in Catholic catechesis is a divine vocation entered into as a responsive offering of love toward God and neighbor. Children and adults of all ages pursue religious education with holy curiosity and restless hearts. CREs, CPLCs, and catechists accompany the faithful and those seeking as they come to know God as the source of creation, and encounter Jesus Christ who poured Himself out for many and continues to give of Himself through the Eucharist.

CREs, CPLCs, and catechists experience keenly the truth which Saint Augustine, the Bishop of Hippo and Doctor of the Church, offered in *The Confessions*, namely, that the restlessness of heart of those in religious education begins to recognize a longing to encounter and know God. Educators of the Faith lead the young and old alike toward understanding and internalizing Augustine's prayer, "You stir us so that praising you may bring us joy, because you have made us and drawn us to yourself, and our heart is unquiet until it rests in you."² Coordinators bring to life these vital attributes for sacramental preparation, to include the OCIA, and adult faith formation as well.

To those who have served U.S. Army Catholic communities so diligently, I offer my profound thanks. Week after week, you prepared lessons for the faithful of this Archdiocese, arrived at the chapel early, and offered your knowledge, charisms, and creativity to help others encounter Jesus Christ, His Church, and His sacraments.

In his recent apostolic exhortation, *Dilexi Te*, Pope Leo XIV addressed educators, saying that "education has always been one of the highest expressions of Christian charity . . . yours is a mission of love because you cannot teach without loving."³ Knowledge of our faith, Pope Leo continued, "liberates, gives dignity, and brings us closer to truth." Those who work in religious education know this mission of love, and your profound service helps to liberate students to know God, to understand their dignity as sons and daughters of the Father, and incorporates them into the active life of the Church so that truth emerges vibrantly in their consciousness, outshining the allure and distractions of modern, secularized culture.

Paired with tremendous gratitude for CREs, CPLCs, and musicians, I also express deep lament that the Army's actions have proven so injurious to the practice of the Catholic faith on Army installations. There are merely 137 Catholic chaplains serving in the active and reserve components of the U.S. Army, yet there are more than 2,500 chaplains in the U.S. Army Chaplain Corps.⁴ This means that less than 5.5% of the Chaplain Corps is Catholic. However, about twenty-percent of soldiers are Catholic. RAND recently reported, "There are approximately six Protestant chaplains for every 1,000 Protestant soldiers, and approximately *one* Catholic chaplain for every 1,000 Catholic soldiers."⁵

Catholic priests who serve as U.S. Army chaplains offer spiritual and pastoral care to soldiers of any, or even no faith. At the same time, they also serve, within their Catholic faith, six times the number of soldiers served by Protestant chaplains. The sheer number of Catholic soldiers and families creates a significant pastoral and administrative responsibility for Catholic chaplains. Moreover, because Catholic chaplains are most often assigned full-time to operational units, such as brigades and battalions, the demands of

² Augustine, Saint. *The Confessions*. Translated by Maria Boulding, 20th ed., New City Press, 2023.

³ Leo XIV, Pope. *Apostolic Exhortation Dilexi Te*. 4 Oct. 2025, Vatican.va, www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/apost_exhortations/documents/dilexi-te.html (accessed 10 October 2025).

⁴ [The Importance of the Chaplain | Article | The United States Army](#)

⁵ "Forecasting Religious Affiliation in the United States Army," 29 November 2021. Available at: https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA752-2.html (accessed 10 October 2025).

the unit, and the operational tempo of deployments, field time, and training rotations, make it impossible for a Catholic chaplain to oversee the daily operations of chapel programs without professional support. This reality highlights the necessity of CREs and CPLCs who offer professional and competent catechetical and administrative support to priests and the Catholic community.

In canceling these contracts, the Army over-burdens Catholic chaplains, harms chapel communities, and impedes the constitutional guarantee of the free exercise of religion especially for Catholics. The cancellation of chapel contracts may appear to be a neutral elimination of chapel support which itself affects the free exercise of religion for all soldiers. However, this action disproportionately harms Catholics, first, because Catholic chaplains are already so low density and in such high demand, and second because the Catholic faith requires continuing religious education and sacramental preparation that can only be accomplished through competent support.

Some Army leaders have offered that the faithful of the AMS should simply go off-post for Mass and religious education. This flimsy offering implicitly acknowledges the harm done to Catholics at military chapels, but it also fails to acknowledge the reality that many soldiers are stationed abroad, in non-Christian countries, where Mass is not available, and religious education is certainly not available in English. Additionally, in remote places in the United States, service members and their families may not have access to Catholic faith formation outside of the military chapel.

The Army's action intolerably infringes upon the free exercise of religion for Catholics in the U.S. Army, as well as my responsibility as Archbishop, to provide pastoral care to those within my canonical jurisdiction. I assure the faithful of this Archdiocese that I will pursue all legal options to address this grave misstep.

Finally, a word of hope and invitation: Catholic military communities are special places of unity, hope, and holiness within military life. These are communities in which Catholics of all ages, races, and backgrounds come together especially during the Mass and forge holy friendships that endure long beyond a service member's time in uniform. I have observed this reality during many pastoral visits to military installations.

Especially in these days when the lack of appropriate staffing for chapels threatens spiritual poverty for Catholics in the military and their families, I return to the apostolic exhortation of Pope Leo XIV. Addressing principally economic poverty, but in words equally applicable to spirituality, the Holy Father wrote:

For the Christian faith, the education of the poor is not a favor but a duty. Children have a right to knowledge as a fundamental requirement for the recognition of human dignity. Teaching them affirms their value, giving them the tools to transform their reality. Christian tradition considers knowledge a gift from God and a community responsibility. Christian education does not only form professionals, but also people open to goodness, beauty and truth.⁶

Because of this reality, I implore the faithful of this Archdiocese to continue to worship at military chapels and offer your gifts and talents for the building up of the Church, especially in sacramental preparation and religious education. Saint Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians 12, "Now the body is not a single part, but many" (1 Cor 12:14). I

⁶ Leo XIV, Pope. *Apostolic Exhortation Dilexi Te*. 4 Oct. 2025, para. 72.

depend upon your generosity in serving in military chapels to continue to propagate the Catholic faith throughout this Archdiocese and build the body of Christ's Church. Your service changes lives and reaches souls.

Invoking the intercession of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton, patroness of Catholic education, for continued faith formation at military chapels, and with gratitude for all who serve in military chapels, I remain,

Sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Timothy P. Broglio". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning.

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