

Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio J.C.D.
Remarks XXV Benefit
11 Nov 10



Before his ship sank at Pearl Harbor, Father Al Schmitt, a Catholic Navy chaplain, “succeeded in passing at least three men through a narrow air duct to the surface of the ship. Despite the efforts of the same men, assisted by a fourth, they were unable to pull the priest upward to safety. He is quoted as having said: ‘push me back...there’s other men who need to get out. You guys get clear of the ship.’ He returned to the interior of the ship and continued to help other sailors until the end came”.¹

I would imagine that many of the members of our Armed Forces and the chaplains here this evening could tell many more stories based on their first hand experience.

Most of you have probably seen the special XXV anniversary edition of *Salute*. It is an attempt to remember, give thanks, and recognize the good work done in the past and right now, without failing to give a sense of hope for the future. A publication is never quite complete. There is always more to tell and the experiences and aspirations of everyone served by this global Archdiocese will never be completely expressed in print.

Having been a part of this particular Church for only the last three years, my own personal experience is limited. Yet from the fifth floor of our headquarters I can assure you that the view is better than from most other vantage points. I am not, of course, speaking about what I see from my office windows, but rather what I have learned in listening to those served by this Archdiocese, the chaplains, and what I have read about the incredible ministry accomplished with the means at our disposal.

Last month I spent a week in Mexico with the military ordinaries of Latin America and my Spanish counterpart. The experience was very interesting. Most of them are

¹ Richard Beyer, *The Catholic Heart: Day by Day*, pp. 179-180.

own seminaries, many incardinate priests, and some are also charged with the police and other groups. Mexico has the most difficult situation. There is no official chaplaincy and priests cannot enter military installations. They try to establish parishes near to them and then the lay members of the community invite the military to participate in events at the parish.

As you can imagine all of my counterparts were very surprised to learn about the uniqueness of the organization of the Catholic chaplaincy for the Armed Forces in the United States. These international exchanges are useful, because they allow all of us to learn, to see things in a different light, and to broaden our understanding. They also help us appreciate the positive and negative aspects of our own system.

This evening is one more opportunity for me as the Archbishop for the Military Services to express my gratitude for your support and the fact that you make it possible for this local Church to accomplish her mission. We would never be celebrating a silver jubilee if generous people like you did not make it possible. I recognize that our situation is not always understood. In response to the recent survey on planned giving done by the Archdiocese someone complained: what does this do for the troops?

I carefully explained that providing chaplains for the future, freeing the Archbishop from administrative concerns so that he can fulfill his mission, and providing what is necessary to ensure that our faithful receive regular visits from the bishops all require planning, funds, and a view not limited to today. I added—somewhat maliciously—that if I could find an airline that would let me board an airplane en route to a pastoral visit without first buying a ticket, I was quite ready to do so.

More touching, however, was the woman who wrote to say that she was sending half her social security check, because she wanted to help ensure religious support to the Catholics in the Armed Services. I never cease to be amazed and humbled by those who are so eager to help this Archdiocese achieve her mission. It makes me all the more careful in how those funds are spent.

There are places where we must be present. I will never forget the young faces at Fort Jackson where I celebrated Mass last July. They were in training and would soon be heading out. As I stood by the door to greet them after Mass, many pulled out crucifixes attached to their dog tags or Rosaries and asked for a blessing. I could not help but to pray silently that they might return home safely and unharmed. I can never forget that we are a Nation at war, albeit undeclared, and the faithful assigned to my pastoral care are at risk.

Speaking of youth, I am delighted that the archdiocesan co-sponsored seminarians now number twenty-eight. They are our best hope for the future. I hope that Father McLaughlin and his successor will continue the ministry of helping young men discern vocations and inspiring some of them to serve in the chaplaincy. The co-sponsored program allows a seminarian with the consent of his bishop to study for the

priesthood with a commitment to enter the chaplaincy three years after ordination. The Archdiocese is disposed to furnish one-half of the costs associated with the education of that seminarian. Some dioceses, however, do not require payment from us. Please pray every day for vocations. It is the one sure path to having more of them, because the Lord Himself told us to pray to the Master of the Harvest in order to have workers.

There is much more to say and there is no more to say. In short, thank you for enabling the Archdiocese for the Military Services to meet its responsibilities. Thank you for joining us this evening. May God bless you!.