



# ARCHDIOCESE FOR THE MILITARY SERVICES, USA

## **On Retired Members of the US Military**

The Archdiocese for the Military Services, as a particular Church, exists to support the spiritual and sacramental needs of the members of the armed forces and their families, the patients in VA facilities, and US citizens working for the Federal Government overseas. All the faithful are welcomed. However, in order to serve well and in accordance with Church Law, it is useful to clarify the position of retired military members.

While on active duty, Catholics have the option of joining either the Catholic Faith Community of the base chapel or that of the local civilian parish, regardless of their residence (or on or off base). However, the choice is specific - and should be clearly established upon arrival at each new duty station. They do remain, however, subjects of the Military Ordinariate.

*(The military archdiocese is legally competent under Canon Law to provide the following actions for its subjects: granting of permission for a mixed marriage, granting a dispensation from disparity of cult, granting a dispensation from canonical form, processing a declaration of nullity – either as a formal case or as a documentary case [lack of form]. With regards to these same persons, the military archbishop can grant his priest-chaplains the faculty to witness marriages validly, and to confer Confirmation for an extraordinary reason – but only for the proper subjects of the Military Archdiocese.)*

After completion of twenty years of faithful service in the US military, retiring members and their dependents may continue to enjoy many of the benefits and services available to active duty members. This includes commissary and exchange facilities, medical and legal services, and the use of various MWR facilities, with qualifying membership, such as the gold course, the pool, the aero club and access to space-A travel on military air.

Upon retirement, the retiree, along with his/her qualifying dependent(s), continues to hold a valid military ID card. This provides access to military installations, facilities and services. However, once retired, a retiree no longer comes under the canonical jurisdiction of the military ordinary – is no longer a subject of the Military Archdiocese. By Church law, (*Spirituali Militum Curae* – the document published by Pope John Paul II in 1986 that defines the responsibilities of Military Ordinariates of the Catholic Church) the retiree now comes under the canonical jurisdiction of the pastor of the local Catholic Church in whose territory the retiree has established residence and domicile.

Does this now exclude a retiree from participation at the base chapel? No. However, there are additional steps that must be taken when the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Marriage are involved.

Since a retiree is no longer a subject of the military archdiocese, the assigned priest-chaplain no longer has canonical jurisdiction over the retiree and his/her immediate family. With the restrictions imposed by *Spirituali Militum Curae*, he cannot, without delegation from the proper pastor, validly officiate at the wedding of non-subjects. According to Church Law he should not, except in danger of death, baptize non-subjects, nor give them First Holy Communion nor admit them to a Confirmation preparation program without having first obtained permission from the individual's "proper pastor." Since the military priest-chaplain cannot be a retiree's proper pastor, the retiree should, even while continuing to worship on the military installation, register and join the local Catholic parish. Thus, when the time does come, for example for the baptism of a (grand)child, the retiree can formally request the permission from his proper pastor to have the ceremony on the military installation.

In summary, military retirees and their families are most welcome to worship and to participate in the Catholic programs on military installations. There are some canonical issues that directly affect the administration of sacraments. With proper and timely coordination with one's proper pastor, these issues can be worked to everyone's benefit.



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