



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS
2000 NAVY PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20350-2000

IN REPLY REFER TO

1730
Ser N097/03009
15 Jan 03

Dear Colleagues:

This evening, I leave with the Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy and the Senior Enlisted Advisor to meet the Chief of Naval Operations in Bahrain. We will accompany him on command visits around the Persian Gulf. Reflecting on last year's trip, during which we visited thirteen commands in just a few days, I remember the incredible commitment and patriotism I saw at every command. I expect this year's experience to be no less moving.

As the drums of war beat around the world, and Armed Forces personnel deploy by the thousands, what will be expected of Chaplains and RPs who accompany their units into harm's way, and those who support their efforts? Many look to us for hope and solace. In many ways, our presence brings strength to those we serve, especially in the hours preceding armed conflict.

What will sustain us all in the days and weeks and months ahead? I believe three things should be paramount: faith in God, renewed dedication to service, and commitment to one another. Faith in our living God's love and grace is essential to spiritual health. Our "witness" of peace in the storm brings hope and inspires courage in those we serve. In combat, chaplains bring comfort to the wounded and dying and solace to the living. Faith in God equips warriors to face death and to live life abundantly.

Service is our focus in peace and war. Service involves leading worship, praying for our units and families, bringing sacraments and scriptures to Sailors and Marines on watch or forward deployed. In practical terms, service is whatever we do in God's name to bolster the lives of those we serve. When chaplains and RPs serve chow, for example, they have a unique opportunity to speak to everyone in their units. When they bring care packages to the front, they bring a taste of home with them.

Commitment to one another is critical for our common good. "Lone rangers" are combat liabilities. Mutual concern and support are essential to the overall positive impact of our ministry. Take time to pray for one another; send encouraging notes and care packages to deployed chaplains and RPs; and take time to visit those under your care.

Newspapers speak of much uncertainty ahead, but our faith, service, and commitment to one another will do much to ease the load we bear and inspire those we serve. I look forward to seeing many of you deployed in the Gulf over the next week. May God bless you and all who serve our Nation.

Sincerely,



BARRY C. BLACK
Rear Admiral, Chaplain Corps
U.S. Navy
Chief of Navy Chaplains