



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS
2000 NAVY PENTAGON
WASHINGTON DC 20350-2000

IN REPLY REFER TO
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Ser N097/01335
30 Nov 01

Dear Colleagues,

We've reached the 226th anniversary of The Navy Chaplain Corps, and I feel justifiably proud of your exemplary and substantive service throughout and beyond the Sea Services.

I felt especially proud yesterday as we said good-bye to a great lady, Mrs. Emelie Koeneman. At her funeral in Arlington Cemetery, I offered condolences on your behalf and remembered Emelie as a "virtuous woman," in the tradition of Proverbs 31:10. While speaking, I glanced about at the many chaplains and Religious Program Specialists present. I thought, "What a wonderful family is our Corps!"

After the service, in a conversation at the graveside, a retired chaplain friend reminded me of the power of this family. He said, "Barry, it's just not the same," and went on to describe how much he misses the camaraderie of the Chaplain Corps. "Cherish it now," he admonished.

Well, I do cherish it. I cherish the opportunities we share to touch lives, to bring people into contact with transcendence. I cherish the opportunities for us to build bridges between people of diverse backgrounds and religious traditions. I cherish the opportunity to participate with you in a wonderful experiment in pluralism, and together to invest in eternity by preparing people to experience God's presence, even under the extreme conditions of armed conflict.

Yours is a legacy of faith and excellence. The spiritual guidance you provide at every level of command brings hope and encouragement to troubled hearts, to Sailors, Marines, or Coast Guardsmen, throughout the world.

Join me early this holiday season in lifting thanks to God for His graciousness to the men and women of the Navy Chaplain Corps, for the good work that lies ahead, and for those who receive our ministry. May we, in our time, see the legacy of excellence grow even stronger as we devote ourselves to God and live in peace with one another.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Barry C. Black".

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