



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 N097/03095  
03 Apr 03

Dear Colleagues:

This has been a dark week in many ways, but I have been reminded anew that we do not have to be afraid of the dark. It is in the depths of darkness that we best see the stars.

I saw the darkness of grief at Chaplain Blaise Wegierski's funeral and the darkness of suffering while visiting the recently wounded at NNMC Bethesda, yet stars still illuminated the night.

At Chaplain Wegierski's funeral, I was enthralled by the beauty of the funeral mass, the glory of the music and the profusion of the praise for this chaplain's exemplary life of service. It was truly a time of celebration. I represented you with remarks about Blaise's contributions to God and country. Many of our Navy colleagues came to say goodbye to Blaise, reminding me that our Chaplain Corps is a caring community. Particularly moving was Chaplain Wegierski's mother's faith. Through her sadness, she spoke of God's blessings in the midst of grief's dark clouds. Like a beacon, her faith dispelled our gloom.

Bright lights continued to penetrate the gloom as I walked the wards at NNMC Bethesda. I went there to thank and encourage the wounded and their families, but I received far more inspiration than I provided. I saw the young faces of America's finest sons and daughters, faces full of gratitude and patriotism. I spoke with those who had lost limbs and yet were more concerned about their comrades still in harm's way than about their own pain and suffering. Family members and loved ones talked about their justifiable pride in the accomplishments of their Sailor or Marine. And all the while, compassion flowed like great healing streams from the hearts of the hospital personnel tending the wounds and responding to the personal needs of these brave Americans. I saw radiant faith that would not shrink, though pressed by many foes.

Leaving Bethesda and riding along the George Washington Parkway back to the Navy Annex, I thought of you. You and every other Navy chaplain and Religious Program Specialist are lights to

those who are beset by the darkness of grief and pain. You are stars that illuminate the lives of those you serve with the faith and hope and love that only one close to the Light of the world can reflect to those in need. In the days ahead, I pray you will be strengthened with a faith that moves mountains, a hope in the One who is our Eternal Anchor, and a love that refreshes every heart you touch.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Barry C. Black". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned directly below the word "Sincerely,".

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