

A Veteran's Prayer

1) Numbers and Lives, Army One Source: An Overview

- What is different about war today?
- What are common health issues reported by our Service Members?
- What are the spiritual and emotional impacts of the War on Terror?
- Returning Soldiers often exhibit changes in behavior.
- How is the war affecting Service Member families?

2) Moral wounds & spiritual resiliency (physical & psychological)

- Feeling the guilt of survival.
- Having luck and state of the art medical interventions on your side.
- Experiencing good luck as an awful betrayal of one's buddies.
- How to heal moral combat injury?
- Addressing the needs of invisible wounds.

3) Welcoming and Listening Parishes

- Culture Shift – from hypervigilance to music
- Lived experience - from photo perfect homecomings to daily routine
- Stories held close - wanting to share but often being cut off

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What can a diocese do?

- 1) Create a Veterans' advisory council
- 2) Invite Reserve and National Guard Chaplains to host training for Clergy and Lay Leaders
- 3) Help parishes compile a list of resources/professionals in the area
- 4) Encourage parishes to develop a particular ministry to the military, veterans, and their families
- 5) Encourage parishes to hold prayer services on Veterans Day and Memorial Day
- 6) Connect with VA Medical Centers and/or military installations in your area to seek what needs exist and what might be some effective ways to serve those needs
- 7) Support/help fundraise and/or bring awareness to particular ministries reaching out to homeless Veterans, etc.
- 8) Look to the Archdiocese of Washington as they continue to develop initiatives to serve Veterans in the parish setting – www.adw.org
- 9) Pray for priests to serve as military chaplains
- 10) Encourage theological reflection: cite biblical pericopes that highlight soldiers, especially those who identify Jesus: "Truly this was the Son of God!" (Mk 15:39), ..."I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof but only say the word and my soul shall be healed." (Mt 8:8).

What can a parish do?

- 1) Pray for Veterans, those serving in the military, and their families
- 2) Invite the parish to learn about the physically and spiritually wounded
- 3) Create a ministry for Veterans – be aware especially of those coming home from the Reserves and National Guard
- 4) Create a parish drop-in center – a lounge for Veterans and others, create safe spaces and a ministry of hospitality and welcome
- 5) Help Veterans find jobs
- 6) Encourage those who are ready to serve in a ministry, help them find a place to belong and share their gifts in the parish
- 7) Create circles of listening**
- 8) Encourage re-establishing relationship with Jesus (Veteran Retreats)
- 9) Provide ways to return to the Sacrament of Reconciliation (*Ignatian Examen*)
- 10) Welcome Veterans and their families back to the table
- 11) Help Veterans navigate the VA Medical System
- 12) Connect Veterans to other Veterans
- 13) Look to [Joining Forces.gov](http://JoiningForces.gov) and consider participating in local projects to support Veterans and families
- 14) Listen Well
- 15) Help Veterans retrieve the gift of hope (soul healing)**

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Resources

- 1) Joining Forces, <http://www.joiningforces.gov>
- 2) National Catholic Partnership on Disability, webinar and toolkit– “How Can We Help?” – Parish Support for Veterans, <http://www.ncpd.org/webinars/veterans>
- 3) US Army Chief of Chaplains Office – “Ministering to Families Affected by Military Deployment: Resources for America’s Clergy,” <http://www.chapnet.army.mil/>
- 4) Home Base Program – provides clinical care and support services, <http://www.homebaseprogram.org/>
- 5) Military Child Education Coalition – Living in the New Normal, <http://www.militarychild.org/professionals/programs/living-in-the-new-normal-linn>
- 6) Redeemer House: Brothers of Charity, Washington, DC – desire to serve chronically homeless veterans suffering from mental illness, <http://www.redeemerhouseforvets.org/>
- 7) John Sippola, et. al., *Welcome Them Home Help Them: Pastoral care and ministry with service members returning from war*, Whole Person Associations, Inc., Duluth, MN, 2009, <http://www.welcomethemhomebook.com>
- 8) Edward Tick, *War and the Soul: Healing Our Nation’s Veterans from Post-traumatic Stress Disorder*, Quest Books, Wheaton, IL, 2005
- 9) Nancy Sherman, *The Untold War: Inside The Hearts, Minds, And Souls Of Our Soldiers*, W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., New York, NY, 2010.
- 10) Nancy Sherman, “Hidden Wounds: Healing After a Soldier’s Homecoming,” *America: The National Catholic Weekly*, May 21, 2012, pp. 13-16.

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Closing Prayer: Canticle of Zechariah

Blessed be the Lord,
The God of Israel;
He has come to His people and set them free.

He has raised up for us a mighty Savior,
Born of the house of His servant David.

Through His holy prophets He promised of old
That He would save us from our enemies,
From the hands of all who hate us.

He promised to show mercy to our fathers
And to remember His holy Covenant.

This was the oath He swore to our father Abraham:
To set us free from the hands of our enemies,
Free to worship Him without fear,
Holy and righteous in His sight
All the days of our life.

You, My child shall be called
The prophet of the Most High,
For you will go before the Lord to prepare His way,
To give his people knowledge of salvation
By the forgiveness of their sins.

**In the tender compassion of our Lord
The dawn from on high shall break upon us,
to shine on those who dwell in darkness
And the shadow of death,
And to guide our feet into the way of peace.**

Glory to the Father,
and to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit.
As it was in the beginning,
is now, and will be forever.

Amen.