



SEP Chaplain's Corner



Dear Chaplains and Commanders,

September has always seemed to me like a month of transition. Summer begins giving way to fall, our routines settle back into place, and perhaps we find a little more time to reflect on where we have been and where we are going.

For those of us serving as VFW Chaplains, that reflection is important.

We spend a great deal of time caring for others. We visit the sick. We comfort grieving families. We make telephone calls, send cards, offer prayers, and sometimes simply sit quietly beside someone who needs another person there. Much of what we do will never appear in a report or be recognized publicly. That does not make it any less important.

Sometimes the most meaningful ministry happens when nobody else is watching.

September also gives us several important opportunities to remember why our ministry matters.

On **Patriot Day, September 11**, we pause to remember the lives lost in the attacks upon our nation and the families whose lives were forever changed. We remember the first responders who ran toward danger when every instinct might have told them to run the other way. We also remember the men and women who answered our nation's call in the years that followed.

For many veterans and families, September 11 is not simply something remembered from history. It is personal. As chaplains, we should be mindful that anniversaries can reopen wounds that others may not see. Sometimes a person does not need us to explain anything. They simply need us to listen.

Later in the month, we observe **National POW/MIA Recognition Day**. The empty chair, the missing place at the family table, and the uncertainty carried by generations of families remind us of a promise we must continue to keep: You Are Not Forgotten.

Those words should mean something to us as chaplains.

They should apply not only to our prisoners of war and those still missing, but also to the veteran sitting alone at home, the widow or widower learning to live without a lifelong companion, the family waiting beside a hospital bed, and the comrade who has quietly stopped coming around the Post.

Sometimes we need to notice who is missing.

September 29 is also VFW Day, marking the founding of our organization. It is a good opportunity to remember that the VFW was built upon veterans caring for veterans. More than a century later, that responsibility still belongs to us.

That brings me back to something I shared with you when we began this year together. The ministry of a VFW Chaplain extends far beyond opening and closing prayers. Prayer is certainly important, but our calling also requires compassion, encouragement, service, and presence.

So this month, I am going to give you a little *homework*. I suppose the *teacher* in me still comes out every now and then.

Think of one person you have not heard from lately.

Then, *call* them.

Do not wait for a meeting. *Do not* assume somebody else has already checked. Pick up the telephone and simply say, “I was thinking about you and wanted to see how you are doing.”

You might discover that everything is just fine.

And you might discover that your call came at *exactly* the right time.

Either way, you reminded someone that they were remembered.

That is chaplaincy.

Thank you for the compassion and dedication you bring to this ministry. Continue learning, continue caring for one another, and never underestimate what God can accomplish through a simple act of *kindness*.

In Faith and Service,

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