

The selfless service of the Four Chaplains



By Henry Howard and Hilary Ott JAN 31, 2024

There is perhaps no greater example of selfless service in the military than the story of the four chaplains who made the ultimate sacrifice during World War II.

“We have a perfect example here of four individuals who exhibited that and give us a legacy that we have to carry on,” said retired Navy Capt. Louis A. Cavaliere, vice chairman of the Four Chaplains Memorial Foundation board of directors.

He was among those attending a Four Chaplains Day ceremony, conducted by American Legion District 9 in Florida on Jan. 28. While American Legion and VFW posts throughout the nation conduct similar remembrances near the Feb. 3, 1943, anniversary of the USS Dorchester sinking, this one is particularly impressive.

“I have been to many ceremonies not only in the United States but all over the world, and I would say this ranks as one of the more moving ones that I have been to,” Cavaliere said.

American Legion National Commander Daniel J. Seehafer, a chaplain, also attended the ceremony. “Today is an awesome event,” the Navy veteran proclaimed. “As we remember something that happened on Feb. 3, 1943. And why is that day so important to remember? It’s the day we call ‘Four Chaplains Day.’ Four individuals, men of God, gave their lives, to save lives.”

Army veteran George "Geo" Bograkos, judge advocate for Post 92 in Hollywood, Fla., coordinated the event. “We are honoring the four chaplains that went down with the USS Dorchester,” he said. “They, in effect, sacrificed their lives for four other sailors. We honor them every year.”

The ceremony has been taking place for at least 20 years. But this year, American Legion members rallied to find a new location. The usual location — the I.T. Parker Community Center in Dania Beach — is currently undergoing major repairs due to flooding last April. This year, the ceremony was held at the NSU Guy Harvey Oceanographic Center Campus in Dania Beach.

“It means a great deal to us to have Commander Seehafer here with us,” Bograkos said. “The fact that he is a chaplain is a plus. We are very pleased and enthused to have him here.”

Seehafer drew a comparison from the four chaplains of the 1940s to what American Legion Family members can do today. “We remember the great sacrifice, we remember the courage, we remember the bravery. It’s a selfless act. Putting others first. This is a prime example of servant leadership.”