

Cor Gathering of 11 November 2025 – Veterans Day

Chris's Introduction

Brothers, I am sorry that I am not with you tonight as I am currently at Gail's sister's house in North Carolina getting ready to fly down to Pensacola, FL to attend their brother's (and our Brother Knight's) funeral. My motivation for the *Into the Breach* lesson on "Brotherhood" is perfect for our Veterans Day gathering, but it is also relevant to a "quality of life" issue that American men, in general, are suffering from – loneliness. The text below comes from my remarks that are published in the current edition of the Palmetto Knight quarterly magazine. My commentary was motivated by our Supreme Knight's column in the September edition of Columbia magazine. I humbly request that each of you think of how Catholic brotherhood enhances our lives as well as the lives of men of all ages.

"Far too many Americans lack social connection in one or more ways, compromising [health, community safety, resilience and prosperity] and leading to poor health and other negative outcomes," wrote Supreme Knight Patrick Kelly. He further stated, "The epidemic has hit young men especially hard – with many struggling more than ever to form healthy relationships." He further points out that, "Young men now account for three out of four 'deaths of despair' from suicide or overdose, which has reached historic levels." He also cited a study that 28 percent of men under 30 have no close friends. I often think of how older many men (and women) are also suffering in isolation, not necessarily through any fault of their own as many are adversely suffering from health issues. I completely agree with our Supreme Knight who writes, "Isolation and loneliness lead to dark places." Those suffering from this poor quality of life can face depression and succumb to addictions, whether it is drugs, alcohol, pornography or even computer-generated "artificial friends."

Incredibly enough, Blessed Michael McGiveney prescribed the antidote for isolation and loneliness. There are certainly differences from society in 1882 as opposed to today, yet the men in Father McGiveney's day were struggling with bigotry and poverty. Alcoholism was rampant, and men were losing their faith. The antidote for social isolation is to develop a loving friendship with our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Please enjoy the lesson on Brotherhood and your prayers dedicated to our Armed Forces and its veterans. Think about how we can help cure our brothers from loneliness.

Feel free to download the booklet, Armed With Faith: The Armed Forces Prayer Manual from the Knights of Columbus website. The URL is:

<https://www.kofc.org/en/resources/cis/cis364.pdf>

Our Honoree
Rear Admiral John J. O'Connor (CHC), US Navy



John O'Connor's first official, long-term job was as a United States Navy Chaplain, a demanding role he embarked upon in 1952. This pivotal first step was not merely a job, but a 27-year-long career that profoundly shaped the man who would later become the influential Cardinal Archbishop of New York.

Father O'Connor's decision to become a Navy chaplain was driven by a combination of personal conviction and institutional need. In the early 1950s, the Korean War was underway, and the U.S. military had a massive need for chaplains to serve the spiritual and moral needs of its service members. He requested permission from his archbishop to join the Navy Chaplain Corps, and that request was granted.

Chaplain O'Connor served in both the Korean and Vietnam Wars. He deployed on ships, and he ministered to Marines in combat zones in Vietnam, often setting up his altar on the hood of a jeep. For his service in Vietnam, Third Marine Division Commanding General Lewis Walt cited, "It is my opinion that no single individual in this command contributed more to the morale of the individual Marine here in Vietnam than Father O'Connor, who spent the majority of his time in the field with the men."

In 1972, Captain O'Connor was appointed as the first Catholic Chaplain at the United States Naval Academy, and in 1975, Monsignor O'Connor was appointed as the Navy's Chief of Chaplains with the rank of Rear Admiral. Admiral O'Connor retired from the Navy in 1979. Following his retirement, newly appointed Bishop O'Connor was assigned as the auxiliary bishop of the newly established Archdiocese of the Military Services.

[\(Source: Flavor365 website; 10-27-2025\)](#)

Opening Prayer

Opening Prayer – A Prayer for Veterans Day (USCCB)

Lord God, Almighty Father,
creator of mankind and author of peace,
as we are ever mindful of the cost paid for the liberty we possess,
we ask you to bless the members of our armed forces.
Give them courage, hope and strength.
May they ever experience your firm support, gentle love and compassionate healing.
Be their power and protector, leading them from darkness to light.
To you be all glory, honor and praise, now and forever.
Amen.

I. Band of Brothers

The “Brotherhood” episode tells us that men need a “band of brothers”—other men they can rely upon. The twelve apostles were such a band.

- Men bond together in “brotherhood” through various experiences, such as team sports, a college fraternity or military service. In what ways are such “band of brothers’ experiences positive? In what ways can they be unhealthy?
- In what ways do the Apostles provide a model for a “band of brothers” today?

II. Tolerance

Dr. Tim Gray says, “We want tolerance, which is very soft and sounds good, but oftentimes is dishonest. What we need is prophets and men to stand up for the truth and fight for reform.”

- In what ways can tolerance—in this context, ignoring the poor moral choices, sinful tendencies or spiritual apathy of a friend—be dishonest? How does standing up for the truth require courage?

Think of an occasion when you felt challenged to stand up for the truth—in a discussion on a sensitive subject, or when the Catholic faith was being questioned or attacked, for example. How did you handle that challenge, and what were the results? In retrospect, what might you have done differently, if anything

III. Fraternal Correction

Fraternal correction is the act of one friend challenging another to amend his ways, urging him to give up or avoid a particular sin, habit or attitude. “What’s required for fraternal correction is an honesty that will engender conflict,” Dr. Tim Gray says in the video, “but we’re afraid of conflict.”

- Stereotypically, it is a manly thing to want to join a fight, to defend a cause. So what kind of conflicts are men “afraid of”?
- What qualities must exist in a male friendship in order for one man to offer the other fraternal correction?

IV. Together in a Group

Curtis Martin explains, “If you look through history, one of the things that’s striking is when there is a group of saints that come forward, they come in clusters, there’s groups. We inspire each other on. Life is designed to be a team sport. We’re supposed to be traveling together. And in a world of social media, we have a lot of friend contacts, but not a lot of human interactions.”

- Sometimes faith or the path to holiness can be seen as a totally personal or individualistic experience. How is growing in faith at least in part a shared experience?
- How has social media undermined the design of life to be a team sport? How can we fight the tendency of social media to isolate us, fragment our lives, and lead to more shallow relationships?

V. The Military Perspective

Speaking from a military perspective, Master Sergeant Sompaul Vorapanich says that “standing in the breach is the most dangerous part of any mission.” He goes on to say, “When someone stumbles, we need to be able to carry them. We never leave a man behind.”

- How is standing in the breach related to brotherhood? Why do men need to stand in the breach for others?
- How does a man “stand in the breach” for his friends and family? How can you do this in your own life?

VI. A final observation from former MLB player Mike Sweeney:

- When iron is sharpening metal, sparks fly. It is intense!
- I’m a beaten-up piece of metal, and I need you, Father, and I need you, Brothers to come along side of me and help sharpen me, to be used by God, as a sword. And when that sharpening takes place, there’s going to be sparks that are flying. It’s going to take vulnerability on my part and vulnerability on yours but be a chunk of metal with me. Help sharpen me to be a sword used by Christ.

Prayers for Veterans

A Warrior's Breastplate – Saint Patrick

I bind unto myself today
The power of God to hold and lead,
His eye to watch, his might to stay,
His ear to hearken to my need;
The wisdom of my God to teach,
His hand to guide, his shield to ward;
The word of God to give me speech,
His heavenly host to be my guard.
Christ be with me, Christ within me,
Christ behind me, Christ before me,
Christ beside me, Christ to win me,
Christ to comfort and restore me,
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ in quiet, Christ in danger,
Christ in the hearts of all that love me,
Christ in the mouth of friend and stranger.
Amen.

Prayer for the Wounded

Father in heaven, grant our wounded brethren comfort in their suffering. Give them courage when afraid, patience when afflicted, hope when dejected, and when alone assure them of the prayerful support of your holy people. Grant this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayer for the Dead

O God, our creator and redeemer, by your power Christ conquered death and returned to you in glory. May all your people who have gone before us in faith share his victory and enjoy the vision of your glory for ever, where Christ lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever, Amen.

V/ Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord.

R/ And let perpetual light shine upon them.

May their souls and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace.

Amen.

Prayer for the Army

Lord God of hosts, stretch forth, we pray, your almighty arm to strengthen and protect the soldiers of our country.

Support them in the day of battle, and in the time of test and training keep them safe from all evil.

Endow them with courage and loyalty; and grant that in all things they may serve without reproach; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Prayer for the Navy

Eternal Lord God, you alone spread out the heavens and rule the raging sea.

Take into your most gracious protection our country's Navy and all who serve therein.

Preserve them from the dangers of the sea and from the violence of the enemy, that they may be a safeguard unto the United States of America, and a security for such as sail upon the seas in peaceful and lawful missions.

In serving you, O Lord, may our sailors serve their country; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Prayer for the Marine Corps

Eternal Father, we commend to your protection and care the members of the Marine Corps.

Guide and direct them in the defense of our country and in the maintenance of justice among the nations. Sustain them in the hour of danger.

Grant that wherever they serve they may be loyal to their high traditions, and that at all times they may put their trust in you; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Prayer for the Air and Space Force

Lord God of hosts, you stretch out the heavens like a curtain.

Watch over and protect, we pray, the airmen of our country as they fly upon their appointed tasks and defend us in air, space, and cyberspace.

Give them courage as they face the foe, and skill in the performance of their duties.

Sustain them with your everlasting arms.

May your hand lead them, and your right hand hold them up, that they may return to the earth with a grateful sense of your mercy; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

Prayer for the Coast Guard

Lord our God, who stilled the raging of the seas by your word of power;
watch over, we pray you, the men and women of the Coast Guard as they sail upon their
missions of vigilant aid.

Grant them courage and skill and a safe return.

Fill them with a grateful sense of your mercy toward them,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Closing Prayer – The Devine Praises

Blessed be God.

Blessed be his Holy Name.

Blessed be Jesus Christ, true God and true man.

Blessed be the name of Jesus.

Blessed be his Most Sacred Heart.

Blessed be his Most Precious Blood.

Blessed be Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar.

Blessed be the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete.

Blessed be the great Mother of God, Mary Most Holy.

Blessed be her holy and Immaculate Conception.

Blessed be her glorious Assumption.

Blessed be the name of Mary, Virgin and Mother.

Blessed be Saint Joseph, her Most Chaste Spouse.

Blessed be God, in his angels and in his saints. Amen