

From Father to Daddy

Persian Gulf 1990

“General Quarters, General Quarters, all hands man your battle stations. This is not a drill.” I thought to myself, “I’m only 41 years old. I’m too young to die.”

Less than a week after Saddam Hussein ordered his forces to invade Kuwait on August 2, 1990, our battleship, the USS WISCONSIN (BB-64), left Norfolk and began her first deployment across the Atlantic in more than 33 years. WISCONSIN, under the command of Captain Jerry Blesch, made the 8,500 mile transit to the Persian Gulf at 25 knots, arriving on station, ready for combat, just 16 days after departure.

Fortunately, our ship was not attacked at 0200 that night by the Iraqis as we took up station in the Persian Gulf. Because our hull was protected by 12.1” of armor, we were not afraid of Exocet anti-ship missiles like the ones the Iraqis fired at the USS STARK (FFG-31) on May 7, 1999, killing 37 sailors aboard. However, the silkworm missiles that Iraq acquired from China posed a far greater threat due their unusually large 11,000 pound warheads.



Anyone who has ever served in a combat zone has had to ponder the possibility of being killed or wounded. What I was unaware of the night “General Quarters” sounded was the presence of a far greater threat that was silently attacking me from within.

It was around a month after our arrival in the Gulf that I felt warm and discovered that I had a 99.9 degree temperature. When the fever did not go down after two days, I reported to sick bay where an X-ray revealed an irregularity on my left lung. I was diagnosed with pneumonia; prescribed an antibiotic; and was told to take it easy for a week or two.

Three weeks later when my temperature only continued to rise and I found myself losing weight and developing night sweats, I was encouraged by our ship’s senior dental officer, Commander Jeff Turner, to get a second opinion about my condition from specialists on board the hospital ship, USNS COMFORT (T-AH-20), that was deployed near us in the Gulf.

After undergoing a CT-scan aboard COMFORT that provided a far better picture of what was going on inside me, I was medevaced to the National Naval Medical Center (NNMC) in Bethesda, Maryland, where I was diagnosed with stage 1-B Hodgkin’s disease.

While living with my close friend, Chaplain Pete Pilarski, the NNMC Command Chaplain, I underwent two months of radiation therapy at the National Institutes of Health. Unfortunately,

the treatments failed to halt the growth of the lymphatic cancer. The only other viable alternative was to undergo six months of chemotherapy that would either save me or kill me.

It was while I was preparing to undergo my chemo treatments that I detached USS WISCONSIN (BB-64) that was slated for decommissioning and reported to Headquarters Marine Corps, just a ten minute walk away from the townhouse I had purchased in Arlington during a previous tour of duty in the Chief of Chaplains Office. I was happy to be working again with Captain Don Krabbe, the Chaplain of the Marine Corps, with whom I served in the Sixth Fleet; as well as for the Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Carl E. Mundy, Jr., with whom I served from late 1981 to early 1982 when he commanded the 36th Marine Amphibious Unit.

Admiral Kelso with whom I served in the Sixth Fleet from 1985 to 1986 was also the Chief of Naval Operations at that time. He and his wife, Landess, took me into their quarters at the Washington Navy Yard when my mom, who had been looking after me, had to return to Pennsylvania to look after her own mother who had become sick. I was also hosted in St. Michaels, Maryland by retired Vice Admiral Ed Waller and his wife Marty whom I kept in touch with since my Naval Academy days when Ed was the Superintendent.

Even though I was very weak and had lost so much weight that I could have been cast in the role of a concentration camp prisoner, I continued to go to work for five to six hours every day. One day General Mundy called me down to his office to inquire how I was getting along. He knew that without the assistance of hand rails I never could have made it to my office on the third floor particularly when the elevator was out of service. We chatted about old times when we deployed together for a NATO winter exercise north of the Arctic Circle along the Soviet border in Norway. When I was about to get up from the chair in his office, we both noticed that my shoestring became untied. Without hesitating a moment, he bent down on one knee and tied my shoe. By chance, as he was helping me up, I caught sight of a casket being drawn by horses en route to a burial service at Arlington National Cemetery just outside his window. As my gaze shifted from the casket to the Commandant, he looked me square in the eyes and said, "Gene, you're going to beat this cancer. God has more work in store for you and the Corps needs you." Feeling almost like an apostle who just had his feet washed by Jesus, I returned to my office determined that I was not going to go down without a fight.



Father Pete Pilarski



General Carl E. Mundy, Jr.



Mom socializing with Gen Mundy

After my last chemo treatment in September of 1991, I developed pneumonia and felt all my systems closing down. I weighed less than 130 pounds and looked like “death warmed over.” Family members and friends stopped by during the week to see me, many with the belief that I might only have a few days left to live.

Looking Back in Time

As I believed my death was imminent, I could not help but reflect back upon my life’s experiences. I thought that week about how fortunate I was to have grown up with a loving mother and father, brother and sister. One important lesson I gleaned from years of pastoral counseling is that many adult problems are rooted in our home experiences. I was grateful that destructive issues like abuse, alcoholism and infidelity were all foreign to my upbringing.

My father worked as a rigger for the Bethlehem Steel Corporation in Johnstown, Pennsylvania where both he and my mom were born after their parents emigrated from Poland around the beginning of the twentieth century. My mom married my dad two years after he lost his first wife who died before giving birth to their third child. Because my sister Patty was only six and my brother Dick was four when our dad married my mom, they never related to my mom as a step-mother who raised them as if they were her own children. Even though my sister Patty was 11 years older and my brother Dick was 9 years older than me, I felt as close to them as children who have the same father and mother.

In addition to my parents, brother and sister, I also grew up with two grandmothers, five aunts and uncles, and eight cousins who all lived in the Johnstown area. My mom’s best friend was her older sister, Jenny, who was also my godmother.



Mom and Dad in 1973



With Patty and Dick in 1998



Mom and Jenny

My paternal grandmother whom we called “Tapta” lived in the adjoining duplex. She left her hometown of Nowy Sącz at the age of 16 and before she was 20 she met and married my grandfather, Walenty Gomułka, who emigrated from Krosno and disembarked at Ellis Island on March 25, 1905. While my paternal grandfather died shortly before I was born on October 17, 1948, it was my grandmother who programmed my tongue and my brain for language learning by conversing with me only in Polish.

Pursuing a Vocation

While my father did not become a butcher like his father who owned and operated a Polish meat and grocery store, he made it clear he did not want me or my brother to work in the steel mills or mines that employed most of the work force in Johnstown, Pennsylvania. When my brother graduated from high school and enlisted in the Navy when I was 10 years

old, I thought that some day I too might want to serve in the Navy. Before I pursued that idea, however, I found myself inspired by a young priest who was assigned to St. Casimir Church where our family worshipped. I was actually ready to enroll in a high school seminary in Michigan where he had studied when my brother, home on leave from the military, convinced my parents to send me to a local high school. Years later, after seeing how many priests who attended high school seminaries during their period of psychosexual development were later accused or found guilty of abusing young men and boys, I came to realize how fortunate I was that my brother intervened as he did.

Some people are blessed with high IQs and don't have to study hard to earn good grades. I'm not one of those people. Although I earned some A's during my four years at Bishop McCort High School from 1962 to 1966, I was basically a solid B student. My main extracurricular activity was playing trumpet in the school band. During my junior year I was also the student conductor of the high school orchestra.

I earned money as a high school student by washing and waxing cars. Because my parents let me drive their car when I got my driver's license at the age of 16, I also worked with maintenance personnel at our high school to earn money to pay for car insurance.

After having come in third place in chemistry in the local science fair for developing an ionic propulsion rocket, my physics teacher asked me to enter the fair with a new project during my senior year. Having built and launched a number of Estes model rockets, I decided to build and launch a real rocket. After obtaining plans for an Alpha One rocket designed by the staff of the U.S. Army Artillery and Missile School in Fort Sill, Oklahoma, I obtained the necessary materials to build the 4½ foot rocket that weighed 9.42 pounds without fuel, and 18.06 pounds with fuel. The most important part of the rocket was the nozzle with its converging and diverging angles that was fabricated by the Bethlehem Steel Corporation where my father was employed.

Even though I was able to replicate the Army's rocket in time for the science fair, I was not able to secure permission from the Federal Aviation Agency to launch the rocket that could pose a serious threat to any aircraft. Consequently, without evidence to show that the rocket actually worked, I failed to win the competition. It was only three years later, during my junior year of college, that a physics professor helped me secure permission to launch the rocket. The rocket was launched from an abandoned strip mine and aimed to land in the middle of a nearby state park. Based on the location where it was recovered, it appeared to have achieved its projected cutoff velocity of seven hundred miles per hour reaching an altitude in the area of 15,000 feet (approximately 3 miles).



It was during my senior year of high school that I took a girl on a date to a James Bond movie which, in those days, was considered somewhat risqué. When I picked her up at her home, I gave her a pendant and chain. Over twenty years later when her husband told her he heard I was in the military and fighting cancer, she wrote me a letter; told me she still had the pendant I had given her; and prayed that I would get better. Her letter, along with letters and cards from so many relatives and friends, encouraged me to fight and to live.

As much as I enjoyed going out with girls and could see myself being a husband and a father, I continued throughout my high school years to have an interest in the priesthood. When the Altoona-Johnstown Diocese announced it was offering scholarships to young men who might some day be ordained priests, I took and passed a qualifying exam and was offered a seventy-five percent scholarship to Saint Francis College in Loretto, Pennsylvania.

When I began my college studies in September of 1966 while living off campus in a fraternity type house for potential future priests, I believed in my heart that Jesus Christ was calling me to be a priest. While there were a few young men in the house whom I thought might be there to avoid being drafted and sent to Vietnam, I felt my motives were deeply spiritual and I found myself very happy. Although I was not excited about having to major in Philosophy, I did enjoy taking Spanish courses as a minor.

It was during my summers, working at a summer camp for boys and girls operated by the Altoona-Johnstown Diocese, and later in a federal government sponsored program (Upward Bound) for academically gifted high school students from low income families, that I met some young women whom I came to like very much. Because we as seminarians were not supposed to date co-eds on campus lest it conflict with our future commitment to celibacy, our summers were the only time we had a chance to socialize with women. Based on my feelings for three different women with whom I worked during three different summers, I believe I would have pursued these relationships if priests were given the option of being married.

The Celibacy Requirement

One event in particular I recalled while I thought I was dying was a confessional experience with a priest in the college chapel. I confessed to having masturbated while fantasizing about making love with a woman who was in one of my college classes. In response the priest counseled me to try to get to know her and possibly befriend her as a person instead of fantasizing about her as an object. When I told him I would really like to do that but was not supposed to date because I was a seminarian, the priest was literally lost for words. After a pregnant pause, he said, "All I can advise you to do is to try to control your sexual urges. Now for your penance say...."

During my four years as a seminarian in college and my four years as a theological student leading up to my ordination in 1974, I never had a lecture or class in which celibacy was honestly discussed. Because I believed I had a vocation from Christ to be a priest, I felt the so-called "charism" of celibacy would allow me to be happy and fulfilled in life even if I were not married with children. From the day I entered the seminary at the age of 17 until I promised celibacy at the age of 24, I was focused on becoming a priest and serving God and his people and gave little thought to personal needs for intimacy and love.

What the priest did not point out to me in the confessional, nor did any seminary spiritual director or professor, was that studies show that “at any one time 50 percent of American clergy are sexually active.”¹ The percentage is even higher particularly among clergy in South America, as well as in Africa where the majority of priests are sexually active and countless priests have also fathered children.

Studies that document how difficult it is for most priests, and even many bishops, to practice celibacy are generally not discussed by Catholic clergy or laity, let alone in Catholic seminaries.² Even though Church officials are keenly aware of the problem, few would admit to it as did Cardinal Jose Sanchez who served as Secretary for the Dicastery for the Clergy from 1991 to 1996. When he was interviewed on BBC television in 1993 and asked for his opinion on studies that claimed that, at any one time, 45 to 50 percent of Catholic clergy were not practicing celibacy, his response was, “I have no reason to doubt the accuracy of those figures.”³

While I enjoyed the friendship of some women with whom I worked during the summers of my years in college, those types of working relationships ceased when I left the United States to undertake theological studies at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas in Rome while residing at the Pontifical North American College (NAC) from 1971 to 1975. I made friends not only with fellow students from different countries, but I also enjoyed the friendship of some priests, Swiss Guards, and local residents of Rome.



With priests, students and Swiss Guard friends in Rome

Upon completion of second theology, after one year in Rome, my parents visited me for two weeks. We toured Rome, Florence, Assisi, Venice and Luzern. While my father’s heart condition limited him in walking at times, I was so happy that he and my mom were able to visit Europe for the first time in their lives. In the course of their visit they discovered that I had acquired a Lambretta 150 that I rode back and forth to school every day. I was fortunate to have survived four minor accidents over a four year period, one that actually occurred the day before my parents’ arrival. Even though traffic in Rome, like many major cities, can be hard to maneuver, the bike allowed me to maintain contact with new friends from many different countries living throughout the city.

When my parents returned to the United States, I flew to Great Britain where Monsignor John Strykowski, a close friend who worked in the Vatican Secretariat of State, arranged for

¹ A.W. Richard Sipe, *A Secret World: Sexuality and the Search for Celibacy* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

² Pepe Rodríguez, *La vida sexual del clero* (Madrid: Ediciones B, S.A., 1995) and Sipe, *A Secret World*.

³ A.W. Richard Sipe, “To enable healing —‘Sexual Trauma and the Church’ conference,” *National Catholic Reporter* (September 17, 1993).

me to work in a Polish parish in Leicester, approximately two hours northwest of London. The pastor, Monsignor Alexander Murat, immigrated to Great Britain after surviving five years in the concentration camp at Dachau. While my primary reason for working in Leicester was to improve my Polish, I ended up learning a lot of other lessons in the process.

One lesson I learned was how one should be patient with people whose first language is different from the primary language spoken in a particular country. When I unintentionally insulted my host, Msgr. Murat, by using an adjective to describe him that had a pejorative meaning in Polish, I was fortunate that a visiting priest from Poland was able to help him understand that I, as someone whose first language was not Polish, honestly was not aware of the caustic and negative meaning the term carried. Because of this language learning experience, I was able years later to successfully defend a Vietnamese Catholic Chaplain who received a career ending fitness report for using a term in a public prayer that in English can be interpreted in a deviantly sexual manner. Fortunately, the Board for Corrections of Naval Records (BCNR) accepted my defense and threw out the chaplain's very negative fitness report which allowed him in time to be promoted to Commander.

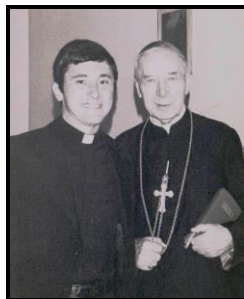
When the time came for me to leave Leicester and return to Rome, I was very grateful not only for the Polish I had learned, but also for the inspiration provided by my concentration camp survivor host. With just one year remaining before I would be asked to promise celibacy, I found it interesting that before I left, Msgr. Murat arranged for me to go out to the movies one evening with a very attractive parishioner who was around my age. He never did say why he arranged the encounter and I never asked.

It was during my second year in Rome that I met Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, the Primate of Poland, who introduced me to the future pope, Cardinal Karol Wojtyła. In addition to being invited to participate in Pope John Paul II's installation Mass on October 22, 1978 and celebrating Mass with him on various occasions in his private chapel, I also assisted him in baptizing the daughter of two close friends, Carol and Hans Roggen, who resided in Vatican City where Hans was a Wochtmeister in the Pontifical Swiss Guard.

Cardinal Wyszyński invited me to visit him in Warsaw in May of 1973. On the occasion of that visit, I regret the Polish government refused my request to meet with my second cousin, Władisław Gomułka, who ruled Poland from 1956 to 1970. Even though I never had the pleasure of meeting Władisław who died in 1982, I did return to Poland in 1993 when I was able to stay with his son, Ryszard, and his family.



Władisław Gomułka (1905-1982)



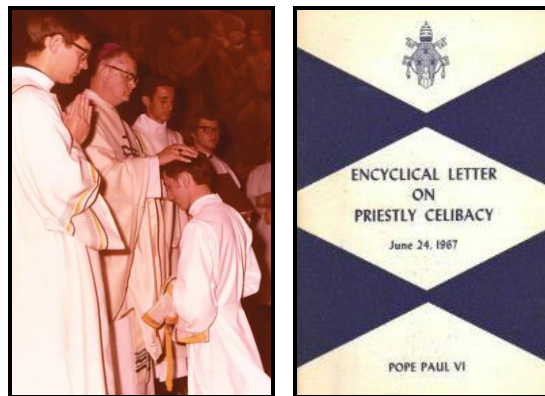
Stefan Wyszyński (1901-1981)



John Paul II & Wyszyński

Władisław Gomułka and Stefan Wyszyński were both nationalists who wanted the very best for their fellow Poles. Even though Wyszyński, the leader of the Catholic Church in Poland, and Gomułka, the *de facto* Polish head of state, sometimes found themselves at odds over church-state relations, they were both imprisoned by Stalin who probably would have had them executed had he not died in 1953. Almost immediately after Gomułka came to power in 1956, Wyszyński was released from prison and Gomułka allowed religious instruction to be offered in public schools. Unfortunately, they had a serious falling out in 1966 on the 1000th anniversary of Christianity in Poland. In response to a controversial letter the Polish bishops sent to the German bishops on the occasion of the Millennium, Gomułka sought retribution by rejecting Pope Paul VI's request to visit the country. Following this confrontation, the two nationalists never publically reconciled before Gomułka fell from power in 1970. Aware of this history, I whispered to Wyszyński as we were being photographed in Rome in 1973, "It can now be said that that Gomułka and Wyszyński are friends."

It was only a few weeks after my May 1973 visit to Poland that I was ordained a deacon in the North American College chapel in Vatican City State. Before my ordination, I had to meet with the rector of the seminary, Bishop James Hickey, and articulate the reasons the Church requires celibacy as a prerequisite for deacons who will later be ordained priests. Like the other 40 some deacons from my class who met privately with the rector, I addressed the Christological, ecclesiological and eschatological reasons behind celibacy, all of which were articulated by Pope Paul VI in his 1967 Encyclical Letter *Sacerdotalis Caelibatus*.⁴



The Christological reason is that because Christ "remained throughout his own earthly life in a state of perfect virginity," a priest can more fully imitate Christ by remaining celibate.⁵ The ecclesiological reason is that without being involved in an "affective relationship" with another person, it is possible for a priest to be more available to serve the needs of his flock.⁶ Finally, the eschatological reason is that by forgoing certain "superficial pleasures" that can come with married life, a celibate priest can be a sign of the "Kingdom of God" that lies beyond what is visible to us here and now on this earth.⁷

While I embraced these reasons in support of a celibate priesthood, it was years later when I was living alone that I came to question not one, but all three of these arguments for celibacy. I questioned the Christological argument because even though Christ himself did not marry or have children, he did not require celibacy of his apostles, including Peter whose

⁴ Paul VI, *Sacerdotalis Caelibatus*, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* (June 24, 1967) 17-35.

⁵ Crescenzo Sepe, "The relevance of priestly celibacy today," *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* (February 22, 1970).

⁶ Claudio Hummes, "Christ's Precious Gift to His Church" *Zenit News Agency* (March 24, 2007).

⁷ Raffaello Martinelli, "Year of Evangelization: Celibate Priests, why?," *The Irish Catholic* (November 26, 2009).

mother-in-law he healed (Mark 1:29-31). While the ecclesiological argument is correct in saying that it is possible for a celibate priest to be more available to his parishioners than a clergyman with a wife and children, the fact is that some married Protestant clergy with families are more available and dedicated than some celibate priests. Finally, I found the eschatological argument the weakest in so far as even though there are certain “pleasures” involved in married life, there are also many challenges and responsibilities that can make the life of a celibate priest far less demanding and stressful than caring for a spouse and children.

One of my friends with whom I studied in Rome decided not to be ordained a deacon because he could not accept celibacy. In so far as he was an Eastern Rite Catholic whose parents immigrated to the United States from the Ukraine, the Roman Catholic Church presented him with two options: either accept celibacy in order to serve as a priest in Pennsylvania where his family settled; or return to his parent’s homeland, marry, be ordained and risk being arrested or killed by the Communist government in power that outlawed the Ukrainian Catholic Church. Because neither of these options appealed to him, he chose to leave the seminary and move to Belgium where he married, raised a family, was ordained a deacon, and worked for Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty in transmitting broadcasts to the Ukraine that was under Communist control until 1991. When my friend visited the Ukraine after the fall of Communism, he was ordained a priest and later immigrated with his family to Canada where the Canadian Roman Catholic bishops, unlike the U.S. Roman Catholic bishops, have no problem allowing married Eastern Rite priests to minister alongside celibate Roman Catholic priests.

Our Lady of Victory Church

Following my ordination to the diaconate in May of 1973, I returned to the United States and served as a deacon at Our Lady of Victory Church in State College, Pennsylvania, the same parish to which I would be assigned two years later following the completion of my Licentiate of Sacred Theology (S.T.L.) degree in Rome. State College is home to the Pennsylvania State University and Our Lady of Victory was the largest parish in the diocese at that time with over 2,000 families. One of the two young associate priests in the parish at that time was later named a monsignor. In 2010, after being ordained some 40 years, he left the priesthood to marry.

What many U.S. Catholics do not realize is that unlike priests in Switzerland, Germany and other countries that leave and receive retirement benefits based on the amount of money that was deposited into a retirement fund over time, priests in the U.S. who leave are often not awarded one penny in retirement benefits. Because priest salaries are so low, the amount of money an ex-priest can collect from Social Security is very small. While some Catholics who were inspired by priests who left the priesthood might find this practice unjust, some members of the hierarchy view this policy as a deterrent to having more priests leave.

After many positive pastoral experiences in the summer of 1973, I returned to Rome eager to be ordained a priest within a year. What I remember most about my year as a deacon was when my friend Monsignor John Strykowski invited me and another deacon to travel with him to Jerusalem for Holy Week and Easter. A deacon could not ask for a better present in anticipation of his upcoming ordination.

On July 13, 1974 I was ordained a priest in the Co-Cathedral of Saint John Gaulbert in my hometown along with two other deacons. I celebrated my first Mass the following day in my home parish, St. Casimir Church. After working two months in Sacred Heart Church in Altoona, Pennsylvania, I returned to Rome to complete an S.T.L. that would qualify me to teach theology in a college, seminary or university.



Priesthood Ordination



First Mass



Our Lady of Victory Church

It was during that final year in Rome as a graduate student that I was invited to serve as a contract priest with the United States Sixth Fleet. My weekend work aboard the flagship USS LITTLE ROCK (CG-4) and ashore with military families in the port of Gaeta planted the seeds of my future naval career. One of the Navy families I befriended and kept in touch with over the years was the Stevens Family. Rather than staying on board the ship on Saturday nights, Tom, Sharon and their three young girls invited me to stay in their home. Tom Stevens, a Lieutenant Commander at the time, went on to be promoted to Rear Admiral and serve as Commander Naval Security Group Command that was responsible for intelligence gathering and denial of intelligence to adversaries.

Following the completion of my degree I returned to the diocese and was assigned again to Our Lady of Victory Church. In addition to my parish duties, I was also invited to serve on the faculty at St. Francis Seminary where I taught two courses in liturgy to thirty-first and second year theological students, more than half of whom were older than I was at the time. Because I was grateful to the diocese for partially funding my college and theological education, I worked *pro bono* as the Director of Respect Life Activities, the Secretary of the Priests' Senate, and the Executive Secretary of the Diocesan Liturgical Commission.

The first time I came to realize that celibacy may be more difficult than I was led to believe during my period of priestly formation was when I attended a retreat for the priests of my diocese two years after I was ordained. During a walk with a priest on the scenic grounds of a former seminary I can remember the priest saying, "I just have one piece of advice for you as a young priest. If you're going to fool around, make sure it's with someone outside of your own parish."

During the five years I served as an associate pastor at Our Lady of Victory before I left the diocese in 1980 to serve on active duty as a Navy Chaplain, I was never even tempted "to fool around." I attribute this to two factors. One, I was living with a pastor, Monsignor Patrick V. Fleming, who was not only a very dedicated and inspiring priest, but also a mentor and a close friend. Secondly, I enjoyed the love and support of a number of families like the Kulpes, Klebans, Pellicciottas, Felices, Bartolomeas, Kluchers and others whose love and friendship I

continue to enjoy to this day. When a young priest friend left the priesthood after living in a rectory with a pastor who was either golfing or drunk, I came to recognize at that time how fortunate I was to be at Our Lady of Victory and how difficult it is to be a celibate priest without love and support from brother priests and parishioners.

In the course of my five years at Our Lady of Victory from 1975 to 1980, I developed a broad based parish respect life program that included helping pregnant women in distress; elderly people in nursing homes; sick and dying people who were hospitalized or homebound; as well as prisoners incarcerated in a nearby state correctional institution. Because the program proved to be very successful and received attention in a national Catholic publication, I was asked by the bishop to serve as the diocesan pro-life director.

Like many diocesan offices that were based on a pre-Vatican II model, I inherited a pro-life advisory board made up entirely of priests, all of whom were older than I was at the age of 28. The first thing I did was to convince the bishop and the board that we needed more lay involvement. This led to the formation of a Respect Life Committee composed of prominent local Catholic lay people, and even some non-Catholics, who represented different areas of expertise. Members of the committee included lawyers, doctors, TV and radio personalities, university professors, and well known people like Penn State Coach Joe Paterno.



While some people may be inclined to judge others not for what they have done, but rather for what they may have failed to do, I will remember Joe for the help he offered me in my parish youth ministry; for the manner in which he dealt with his son David who was in a coma after a serious trampoline accident; and for his strong support of our diocesan respect life program.

As the number of altar boys in the parish increased significantly during my five year assignment, there were times when Joe loaned me his van and used my car so I could transport a number of young people to various activities. He appreciated the fact that his three sons and two daughters received not only a good religious education, but that the church also sponsored a number of youth activities including field trips to places like the Nation's Capital that was four hours away.

When Joe's oldest son, David, was seriously injured and flown to the Geisinger Medical Center, I visited and anointed him while he was in a coma in the presence of his parents and siblings. Following the anointing, Joe escorted me to the elevator and said, "Father, I never asked God to help me win a football game, but I am asking God to let David live and recover. I sure hope and pray God hears our prayers." Two days later David came out of the coma and made a superb recovery. When Joe and Sue later learned I drove to Danville to anoint

David instead of driving to Johnstown to celebrate my birthday with my parents, the Paternos arranged a birthday party for me the following year at their home complete with my favorite (banana) cake.

The third way in which I will remember Joe Paterno will be for the help he provided while serving as a member of our diocesan Respect Life Committee. His greatest contribution was the making of a radio and TV public service announcement in which he said, "Every human life needs love and deserves respect: the unborn, the elderly, the mentally and physically handicapped, the sick and the dying. I believe human life is sacred, and I invite you to respect life."

The success of our diocesan respect life program was reflected in an invitation I received to speak at a National Catholic Pro-Life Convention at the Waldorf Hotel in New York City. My experience in this endeavor taught me that gifted, respected and dedicated Catholic lay people, often only called upon to help raise money, can make a big difference in the life of the Church and impact the local community if only they are given a chance.

It was during my fourth year in State College that I requested and received permission to join the Naval Reserve. Just three months before I left to attend Naval Chaplains School in Newport, Rhode Island, my father died on April 9, 1978. He was only 67 years old. One of the fondest memories I have of him was how he would rise very early in the morning, while my mom, brother, sister and I were still asleep, and fire up the coal furnace in the winter so the house would be warm when we awoke. While I was deeply saddened by his death particularly at a relatively young age, I was also very thankful that he not only loved me very much, but he also gave meaning to the quotation, "The greatest gift a father can give his children is to love their mother."

Following my return from two months of Chaplains School, knowing I had a year left before I might be transferred to another parish, I discussed with Monsignor Fleming the idea of serving someday on active duty. Because he felt it would be better to serve while I was still young, he suggested that I request permission to serve on active duty following the completion of my five-year assignment in State College. Because of my record of service to the parish and the diocese, and owing to the fact there were no priests from our diocese in any branches of the military at that time, the bishop granted me a three-year leave.

Ministry in the Marine Corps and Navy

When I left Pennsylvania and drove to North Carolina to begin my tour of duty with the Second Marine Division, I had no idea that my experience would prove so positive that it would lead me in time to request an indefinite extension to serve on active duty beyond my initial three-year commitment. Assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 8th Marines (2/8) that was commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Tony Zinni, I thoroughly enjoyed ministry with Marines and their families. After six months of training at Camp Lejeune, NC and in the desert at Twenty-Nine Palms, CA, we deployed for six months to the Mediterranean Sea in 1981 where, in addition to my chaplain responsibilities, I was also able to serve as an Italian and Spanish interpreter for foreign officer briefs and port calls.

During a port call to Naples I caught a train and traveled to Rome with my chaplain's assistant, Lance Corporal Bob Chappell. We stayed in the Vatican with my close friends,

Carol and Hans Roggen, whose wedding I celebrated in Chicago and whose daughter, Kathleen, was baptized by Pope John Paul II. Having been invited to his installation Mass in 1978 and to assist him in Kathleen's baptism in 1980, I was hoping that I might be able to visit briefly with the pope during this impromptu visit. When the pope's secretary informed me that he could squeeze me in between two appointments, I borrowed a suit from a Swiss Guard who was the same size as Corporal Chappell. When Bob asked why he needed to change from his blue jeans, I told him I wanted him to meet an old friend and the proper dress in the Vatican was a suit and tie. When we were waiting in a room in the Apostolic Palace and the pope walked in accompanied by his secretary, Bob was totally surprised. The encounter was very warm and the pope, whose own father was a lieutenant in the Polish army, was very interested in talking with me about my chaplaincy. One of the biggest regrets of my life is that when the pope's secretary said the pope wanted to know if I would like to have dinner with him, I told him that I had to be back aboard my ship that evening but would be back in May for another port call. Unfortunately, we never returned to Italy in May owing to a crisis in Lebanon. Further, the week we were scheduled to be docked in Naples was the same week the pope was shot in St. Peter's Square by Mehmet Ali Agca.



Following my one year with 2/8 commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Tony Zinni, I was reassigned to the 36th Marine Amphibious Unit (36th MAU) under the command of Colonel Carl E. Mundy, Jr. Both Zinni and Mundy in time achieved four star rank with Tony commanding U.S. Central Command and Carl completing his career as the 30th Commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps. Although I had no intention of serving more than three years on active duty, my experiences in 2/8 and with the 36th MAU moved me to consider requesting an indefinite extension from my bishop. I was also influenced to consider staying longer by the quality of ministry I witnessed at Camp Lejeune by three Catholic chaplains in particular: Father James Kelly, Monsignor John McNamara and Father Pete Pilarski. It was Monsignor McNamara who, upon becoming the Deputy Chief of Chaplains, secured an appointment for me to serve at the U.S. Naval Academy (USNA) following the completion of my Marine Corps tour. It was during my two-year tour in Annapolis that my bishop granted my request for an indefinite extension that neither of us realized would result in a twenty-four year military career.



2nd Marine Division (1980-82)



U.S. Naval Academy (1982-84)



Visit of RADM John McNamara

Just as I enjoyed the friendships I developed and maintained while serving for almost five years in State College, so too did I enjoy befriending some very talented midshipmen, fellow chaplains and supportive members of the Naval Academy chapel community. The Academy Superintendent during the first year of my tour was Vice Admiral Edward Waller who was not only a legend in his own Fixed Wing Patrol Squadron (VP) community, but his reputation for personal excellence also extended down to the deckplate. The most inspiring chaplain with whom I served at the Academy was Captain Larry Ellis, the senior Protestant Chaplain with whom I would work years later when he became the Chaplain of the U.S. Marine Corps. Although I enjoyed encountering former midshipmen from my academy days at various commands throughout my career, it broke my heart when Greg Karpick, a former midshipmen whose wedding I performed and whose daughter I baptized, died of an aneurism at the age of 31 shortly after serving as a Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) instructor at the University of Pennsylvania.

It was after my two-year tour at the Naval Academy that I received orders to report in July of 1984 to Commander United States Sixth Fleet (COMSIXTHFLT). Having worked years earlier for the Sixth Fleet as a contract priest, it was nice to return to Gaeta that is only a short two-hour drive south of Rome. Similar to my previous two tours where I enjoyed excellent working relations with my commanding officers, so too was it a real pleasure working my first year for Vice Admiral Edwin Martin, and my second year for Vice Admiral Frank Kelso II. When VADM Martin was a commander assigned to Attack Squadron Thirty-Four, his A4 Skyhawk was shot down southeast of Hanoi on July 9, 1967 and he was a prisoner of war (POW) for five years and eight months. VADM Kelso detached the Sixth Fleet in 1985 and went on to serve as the Chief of Naval Operations from 1990 to 1994.



VADM Martin



Award from VADM Kelso



With LT Greg Karpick



Hoisted aboard a frigate

There were three chaplains (Protestant, Jewish and Catholic) assigned to COMSIXTHFLT. Captain Donald Krabbe, a Missouri Synod Lutheran, was the Fleet Chaplain. Commander

James Apple, a Rabbi, and I were Assistant Fleet Chaplains. We enjoyed a very close working relationship and became friends for life.

Having spent over 21 of my 24 months in the Sixth Fleet riding some 80 ships for 5-7 days each, I welcomed orders to the Navy Chief of Chaplains Office in the Washington, D.C. area. While my job title was Head, Ecclesiastical Relations and Recruitment Branch, my primary responsibility involved the recruitment of Roman Catholic (RC) priests and seminarians. In the course of my three-year tour, there were 71 active duty RC accessions, 33 RC reserve accessions and 52 RC chaplain candidate accessions. When many of the priests who were recruited into the Navy Reserve and seminarians who became chaplain candidates later came on active duty, the total number of RC chaplains who served on active duty that were recruited during my recruiting tour exceeded 100. While there were 271 RC Navy chaplains on active duty when I left the Chief of Chaplains Office in 1989, there were fewer than 50 RC Navy Chaplains on active duty in 2016.



USS WISCONSIN (BB 64)



Religious Ministry Team



Gulf War Deployment

My reward for a very successful recruiting tour was to be given orders as Command Chaplain aboard the battleship USS WISCONSIN (BB-64). The Protestant chaplain who worked with me, Lieutenant Timothy Rott, was raised Catholic and actually was enrolled at one point in a high school seminary. It was during his college years that he met his wife, Georgette, who was Presbyterian. Because he still felt a calling to ministry that he could not pursue as a Catholic if he were married, he became a Presbyterian minister. Not only was he a very gifted and dedicated chaplain, his wife was also very effective in helping military spouses in the Norfolk, Virginia area during the Gulf War.

My Only Regret

Because I couldn't think of a better military career path; a better parish assignment following my ordination; better educational opportunities particularly in Rome; I thought, "Even if I die at the age of 41, I can't say that I led a boring life." While I believed myself to have been a good chaplain, a good priest, a good son, brother and friend, I had but one regret.

I thought about the morning I returned to work at Camp Lejeune and was greeted by my Marine chaplain's assistant, Lance Corporal Robert Chappell. After sitting at my desk Bob walked in and asked, "Did you go out last night?" I said, "Yes. Why do you ask?" He didn't answer but further asked, "Who were you with?" When I told him I had dinner with a Navy nurse, he said: "You should do that more often." When I asked him why he would say that, he said, "You just seem very happy today and are in a very good mood." I then asked, "Are you saying that I'm often moody or unhappy?" He said, "No. You're a good chaplain, but isn't it written somewhere in the bible, "And God saw that it was not good for man to be alone"?

As I thought my days and hours were numbered, my only regret was that I felt I could have been a better chaplain, a better priest, and a better person if I were married with a wife and children. Those were my last thoughts before I fell asleep not knowing if I would wake up the next day.

When I woke up the next morning and felt hunger, something I didn't feel in a long time, I wondered if I might possibly be getting better. General Mundy said I was going to win this battle, and I thought he might just be right.

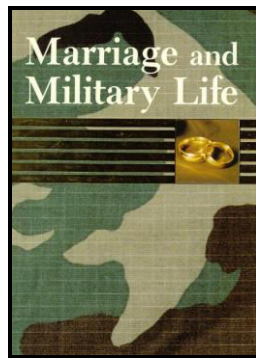
It actually took about four months before I was able to walk up a step without holding on to something or someone. Even though I was beginning to gain back the 40 pounds I had lost, it seemed that I had aged about 20 years from the time I was medevaced from the Gulf.

By the time I reached the mid-point of my three-year Marine Corps tour, I was working full days and was slowly gaining back the weight I had lost. My job as Deputy Chaplain of the Marine Corps was also proving very interesting. In addition to developing devotional materials that featured a "Prayer at Sunset" photograph I took at Camp Lejeune, I authored a marriage preparation and enrichment relationship inventory, 100,000 copies of which were published by both the Marine Corps and the Navy. I also wrote a number of articles published in military journals, magazines and newspapers aimed at promoting strong marriages and reducing high military divorce rates. These writings were preceded by over fifteen years of pastoral counseling in which I derived a great deal of satisfaction in helping married and dating couples deepen and strengthen their relationships. I couldn't help but be motivated to work in this field particularly after a couple asked me to be the godfather of their child they feel may not have been conceived had I not helped them resolve certain marital problems.

My most notable accomplishment as Deputy Chaplain of the Marine was my co-authoring of the Core Values of "Honor, Courage and Commitment." The Chaplain of the Marine Corps, Captain Larry Ellis, convinced the Commandant, General Mundy, that many of the values the Marine Corps was committed were no longer supported by contemporary culture. Because he agreed with his assessment, the Commandant commissioned his Deputy Chief of Staff for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, Lieutenant General Matthew Cooper, to work with our office and "get an ethics and moral values effort going." When Chaplain Ellis tasked me to identify specific values that might be presented to the Commandant for his approval, I researched the matter extensively, consulted with a number of senior Marine Corps officers and enlisted, and came up with a list of three values: "courage, honor and excellence." LtGen Cooper likewise came up with a list of five values that he too submitted to the Commandant. When Gen Mundy reviewed our input, he chose "courage" that we both recommended; "honor" that appeared in my list; and "commitment" that LtGen Cooper proposed. Because I felt "commitment," analogous to "fidelity," was very much in keeping with the Marine Corps motto "*Semper Fidelis*," I thought it was a far better value than "excellence." Consequently, I could not have been happier with the Commandant's choice of values. The Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Frank Kelso II, who at the time was the acting Secretary of the Navy, liked the Core Values adopted by the Marine Corps so much that he ordered the Navy's Values of "Integrity, Professionalism and Tradition" be replaced with "Honor, Courage and Commitment." Because the Marine Corps and the Navy are both part of the Department of the Navy, there is now one set of Core Values for the entire U.S. Naval Service.



"Prayer at Sunset"



Relationship Inventory



Core Values of the United States Naval Service



As the Deputy Chaplain of the Marine Corps, in addition to serving on the Inspector General (IG) Team, the Suicide Prevention Committee and the Conscientious Objector Board, I was also responsible for monitoring disciplinary cases involving Roman Catholic (RC) Chaplains. During my three year tour, five Catholic Chaplains, 10 percent of the RC chaplains serving with Marines, committed Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) offenses; four involving homosexual behavior and one involving pedophilia. Three of the five RC Chaplains were incarcerated, one having received a 12 year sentence for pedophilia. Two others received other than honorable (OTH) discharges. While I was aware of sexual abuse problems among Catholic chaplains serving Marines who make up less than 20 percent of all U.S. military personnel, I had no idea at the time how extensive the abuse problem was throughout the entire Catholic Church.

One reason that my involvement in these abuse cases affected me deeply had to do with my mentoring experiences with the altar boys at Our Lady of Victory. Because I became close to many of these boys who today are grown and have children of their own, I found it quite abhorrent that other priests would take sexual advantage of boys or young men. Aware of all the sordid details of these cases, I did my best to deal with both the victims and the perpetrators of the abuse in a professional manner. Unfortunately, this was not always the case with a number of Catholic bishops who often covered-up the wrong doing and moved abusive priests to other parishes.

Naval Amphibious Base Coronado

When I completed my Headquarters Marine Corps tour in 1994 with orders to Naval Amphibious Base Coronado, I invited my mom to give up her home in Johnstown, Pennsylvania and move with me to California. She loved living in Coronado where, unlike Johnstown, the average low temperature is 60 degrees and the average high is 70 degrees. Unfortunately, after only one year she was diagnosed with Myelodysplastic Syndrome and given one year to live. She died peacefully at home on July 25, 1996 and is buried next to my father in Johnstown. I have very fond memories of trips we took together particularly to Europe on military aircraft, and I was so fortunate that, in addition to our last two years together in beautiful Coronado, she was able to visit me frequently at all of my duty stations.



With Mom in Old Town San Diego



Father Jim Kelley with "St. Paul"



Jim Kelly and Miles Barrett

Following my Mom's death I went to Alaska with my friend, Chaplain Miles Barrett, to visit our friend, Father Jim Kelley. Jim retired as a Navy Chaplain with the rank of Captain at the age of 62 and, instead of returning to his diocese of Fall River, Massachusetts, he received permission to work for the Archdiocese of Anchorage where he was responsible for over 15 mission parishes that were spread out over an area of some 2,000 square miles. The cost of maintaining, insuring and fueling his two planes that he named "St. Peter" and "St. Paul" was very expensive, particularly when he tried to visit his mission communities in the Bristol Bay and Aleutian regions of Western Alaska every two weeks. Because the Archdiocese was not able to cover all of his expenses, I helped raise funds among military chapels to support his ministry. Very few people knew that he used his military retirement pay to cover more than half the expenses of the Holy Rosary Mission.

In the course of the week Miles and I spent with Jim, we attempted to fly every day to at least two or three communities. Even though Jim was over 18 years older than Miles and me, we marveled at how he could operate in such cold, windy conditions that made us want to run for shelter. When I asked Miles, a very qualified pilot who owns his own airplane, what he thought of Jim as a pilot, he said he was truly awesome. When we bid farewell to Jim and were waiting to board our flight back to Seattle and San Diego, I told Miles, "I don't think Jim will live to retire but will 'die with his boots on.' You can't fly in the conditions we experienced this past week and not have an accident."

On Palm Sunday, April 8, 2002, Father Jim Kelly crashed into Tuklung Mountain, seven miles southwest of Manokotak. Having been a mission priest based in Dillingham for over ten years, he died at the age of 73 doing the two things he loved the most: ministering and flying. He was the most inspiring and dedicated priest I have ever known.

One of the most exciting aspects of my Coronado tour was conceiving and helping to design a new chapel. The chapel I inherited was a converted World War II barracks that had a cracked foundation and a serious overcrowding problem. Although the chapel was in dire need of repair, attendance was excellent every Sunday at the two Catholic Masses and one Protestant Worship Service. Members of these worshipping communities were more than willing to address their facility problem at a time when Military Construction (MILCON) funds were not available for chapel construction. Because the command was able to use no more than \$300,000 in minor construction funds for local building projects, the Commanding Officer, Captain Ed Kelly, felt that it would be impossible to build a new chapel for that small amount. When I countered by suggesting that we use Seabee labor and complement the \$300K with free will contributions for decorative items like stained glass windows, he asked how much money I thought we would have to raise for these items. I opined that the items would probably cost about \$100,000. Unlike a civilian church that can take out a loan and pay

it back over a number of years, I would personally be responsible for paying for all items once the chapel was completed. Even though people who worship at military chapels are not as generous as people who are members of civilian congregations, I thought, with the help of a fund raising committee, we could raise the necessary amount. Despite opposition from the Chief of Chaplains Office that viewed this project as a threat to future MILCON chapel funding, the CO strongly endorsed the undertaking and we proceeded accordingly.



Old "Chapel from the Sea"



New "Chapel from the Sea"

When chaplains in the Chief of Chaplains Office falsely accused me of mixing appropriated and non-appropriated funds to complete the project, I requested help from a friend, Vice Admiral Phil Quast, who brought the matter to the attention of the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO), Admiral Mike Boorda. Because the CNO himself saw our undertaking as an ingenious approach to chapel construction at a time when MILCON funds were not available, he called the Chief of Chaplains and told him either to produce evidence that we were mixing appropriated and non-appropriated funds or to apologize. While the Chief of Chaplains ended up apologizing, I deeply regret that Admiral Boorda took his life one week later. I first met Admiral Boorda in 1988 when he was a Battle Group Commander operating in the Sixth Fleet. I also delivered the benediction at his CNO change-of-command ceremony when Admiral Frank Kelso II retired in 1994.

The Chapel was dedicated on February 23, 1997 complete with stained glass windows, custom designed doors with beveled glass, Spanish marble, Italian floor tiles, handcrafted altar with matching pulpit and chairs, a state of the art audio visual system, and an ecumenical baptismal font designed for both infant and adult immersion baptism. One of its most unique features is a life-size replica of the Ark of the Covenant mentioned in both the Bible and the Qur'an that serves as a Blessed Sacrament Tabernacle for Roman Catholics.



With (Seabee) RADM Dames



Exterior of Chapel from the Sea



Ark of the Covenant Tabernacle

When the bills for all the decorative items were tabulated, they did not total \$100K, but rather \$200K. I truly believe it was a miracle we were able to raise that exact amount and I

did not have to withdraw any money from my savings account to pay for any of these items. However, had I known it was going to cost that much, I probably never would have attempted the project. While I was proud of our new beautiful chapel when I completed my three year tour of duty, I was even more proud of the congregations that grew stronger and more robust during that time.

Naval Air Station Sigonella

Four months after the chapel dedication I completed my tour and reported to Naval Air Station Sigonella that was in need of an Italian speaking Command Chaplain with the rank of Captain. It was here in Sicily that I met my future wife, Leila, who was in the process of getting out of the Navy after serving on active duty for four years.

I can still remember the day I arrived at one of our two Chaplains' offices where I met Leila as she was walking down the corridor. My very first impression was, "Wow, what beautiful blue eyes she has." To appreciate this feeling you have to understand that for years I jokingly told Marines and Sailors, "If you want to make a good impression on a woman, tell her, 'You have beautiful eyes'." My friends would even say that I could say this in 27 languages. However, when I met Leila and she actually had absolutely beautiful eyes, I was lost for words.

Leila grew up in Fairfield, Connecticut. While I was exposed to Polish at a young age, Leila lived in a home where her parents spoke Hungarian and English. Her father, the Rev. Dr. Alexander Havadtoy, is an ethnic Hungarian who was born in Kovasna, Romania. Her mother, Magdalene, was born in Windsor, Canada where her parents settled after emigrating from Hungary. In addition to being the pastor of the Calvin United Church of Christ in Fairfield, Leila's father was a supervisor of theological students at Yale University. He also worked for Radio Free Europe from 1967 to 1992 where his monthly Protestant Program reached over one million listeners per broadcast.

Leila attended Smith College while also taking courses at Amherst College and Wesleyan University where she studied for one year. In the summer before her senior year she participated in a language program at the University of Debrecen in Hungary. Following her graduation from Smith College with a Bachelor Degree in Political Science, she studied Intermediate Intensive Mandarin at Tunghai University in Taichung, Taiwan and later backpacked throughout mainland China and Hong Kong.

Following her return from China, Leila pursued a graduate degree in theology at Yale Divinity School. Upon completion of her first year of theology, Leila was commissioned an Ensign in the Navy Chaplain Candidate Program and served over a three year period at Navy commands in San Diego, California and Newport, Rhode Island. Following the completion of her theological studies, she was ordained in the First Hungarian Reformed Church on East 69th Street in New York City on September 22, 1992. In addition to serving as a supply pastor at two churches in Connecticut for almost two years, she also taught a semester of English at Karolyi Gaspar School in Budapest, Hungary.

Upon completion of her teaching assignment, Leila attended Naval Chaplains School in Newport, Rhode Island and reported to her first duty station as Command Chaplain aboard USS BUTTE (AE-27). Her two year tour involved deployments both to the Mediterranean Sea and the Arabian Gulf during the Persian Gulf War (August 1990 – February 1991).

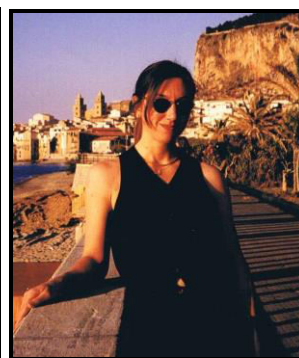
Following this tour she accepted two year orders to Naval Air Station Sigonella where she was serving as the senior Protestant Chaplain when we met.



USS BUTTE (AE-27)



Leila praying during Burial at Sea



Leila touring Sicily

The Command Chaplain whom I relieved, unaccustomed to working with intelligent and independent women, was not very complimentary of Leila. When he told me upon my arrival that she was getting out of the Navy and I should just “humor her” until she did, I didn’t expect much from her professionally. However, it didn’t take long before I came to realize what a very dedicated, pluralistic and talented chaplain she was.

Leila’s ability to reach out to a broad variety of individuals was demonstrated in her work with African American sailors who approached her about having a Sunday Gospel Worship Service. Not only did she as the senior Protestant chaplain arrange for a Black enlisted sailor to be appointed as a lay leader authorized to lead worship services, she also made sure that requests for items like choir robes, gospel music and musical instruments were filled.

The Gospel Service proved to be extremely successful. Some Protestant chaplains would feel threatened if attendance at a lay-led Gospel service rivaled attendance at their chaplain-led services. This was not the case with Leila. She was so pleased with the lay leader that she wrote to the Chief of Chaplains Office and arranged for him to receive an “Honorary Chaplain” certificate that she presented during one of their worship services.

Because of our staffing and worship schedule, one chaplain could ordinarily take a weekend off and travel while another chaplain conducted all the scheduled services for that denomination. Leila took advantage of this arrangement and was able to go on short trips to places like Berlin, Paris, Amsterdam and St. Petersburg. When she was not traveling we were able to visit some towns on the island and enjoy tasting local dishes and savoring local wines.

As a result of the fact that people in the military move every 2-3 years, it is very common to make friends and enjoy their company only to move on with your respective lives once you receive orders to another duty station. While some people might keep in touch with a Christmas card or an occasional email, most service members find it impossible to stay in touch with all the people they befriended at one place or another. Once Leila was out of the Navy I thought she, like other single men and women I met over the years in the military, would before long meet someone, fall in love, get married and have a family.

Before Leila left Sicily I wanted to make sure that she would have a nice ceremony to mark the completion of her seven years of active duty and reserve service. Consequently, I arranged for her to receive her end of tour award at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy in New London, only one hour from her parent's home in Milford, Connecticut. The Command Chaplain at the Academy, Captain Bill Dillon, a close personal friend, put together a very moving ceremony present at which were a large number of chaplains in training from the Naval Chaplains School in Newport, Rhode Island. Leila's parents, Magdalene and Dr. Alexander Havadtoy, were deeply appreciative of the courtesies they were extended at the ceremony and wrote saying they would be happy to welcome me as a guest in their home if I ever had the occasion to be in New England.

Following Leila's departure I made four one-week trips with members of Explosive Ordnance Disposal Mobile Unit (EODMU) 8 to Bosnia. It was there that I enjoyed interaction not only with military personnel from various North American Treaty Organization (NATO) nations, but also with a chaplain and troops from Russia. Never since my student days in Rome did I have a chance to use my Polish, Italian, Spanish, French and German over a period of a few days.



Bosnia 1998



Sarajevo 1999



Family reunion in Warsaw

It was half way through my tour in Sicily that my sister Patty, my brother Dick, and his wife Rose Marie visited me in Europe. We met in Poland where we stayed with our cousin Ryszard and his family in Warsaw. Ryszard told us many interesting stories about his father, Władisław, before, during and after he was the head of state in Poland from 1956 to 1970. Our two-week get-together ended in Rome where I arranged for my family to meet Pope John Paul II following morning Mass in his private chapel.



Dick and Rose Marie with Pope John Paul II



Rose Marie and Patty with Holy Father



Monsignor Gene

Toward the end of my tour I received word from the Archbishop for the Military Services, U.S.A., that I was named a "Prelate of Honor to His Holiness," a position commonly identified with the title "Monsignor." While I did not seek this honor, I saw it as a sign of confidence in my ministry and leadership abilities.

Even though I was honored to be made a monsignor and found my pastoral work fulfilling, I found myself feeling increasingly lonely. As a young priest, it was easy to bond with older priests with whom I shared a common heterosexual orientation. Now, as I was becoming an “older” priest, it was harder to bond with younger priests in the military, many of whom were homosexually oriented and inclined to socialize with priests who shared their orientation.

A few months before my tour of duty was up in Sicily, I attended a Chaplains’ Conference in Rota, Spain where the Chief of Chaplains, Rear Admiral Byron Holderby, requested help in identifying clergy, particularly women and priests, who would be interested in becoming Navy Chaplains. Because I continued to keep in touch with Leila by email, I contacted her and asked if she would like me to include her name in a list of prospective chaplains. She responded affirmatively as, after months of searching, she was still not able to locate a Church that she was interested in pastoring. When I submitted her name along with a list of Catholic priests whom I recruited years earlier into the Chaplain Candidate Program when they were seminarians, the Chief of Chaplains wrote back and thanked me with the assurance that his staff would contact all of the clergy members whose names I submitted.

When I completed my two-year tour in Sicily I visited Leila and her parents at their home en route to my next duty station in Hawaii. Leila and I visited Manhattan where she was ordained, as well as Newport, Rhode Island where we both attended Naval Chaplains School. After I left and made my way to Hawaii, Leila later told me that her father, who was not fond of any of her college or graduate school boyfriends, said that it was too bad I was a priest as I would make a very good husband.

Marine Forces Pacific

In April of 1999 I reported as Force Chaplain to Marine Forces Pacific (MARFORPAC) based at Camp H. M. Smith in Hawaii. It was at the beginning of this tour that the Secretary of the Navy, Richard Danzig, presented me with the Navy League of the United States Alfred Thayer Mahan Award “for literary achievement and inspirational leadership.” My previous CO at NAS Sigonella, Captain A.J. Nelson, submitted my nomination for this award for co-authoring the Marine Corps and Navy Core Values; for authoring marriage preparation and enrichment publications for dating and married naval personnel; as well as for several articles I had published in *Proceedings* and other magazines and journals.



MARFORPAC Chaplain



SECNAV presenting Alfred Thayer Mahan Award

The month following my arrival in Hawaii, Leila emailed me and said she was being recommissioned and was told that she would be receiving orders to the First Service Support Group at Camp Pendleton, California. Shortly thereafter, she was contacted again by the detailer and asked if, instead of going to Pendleton, she would be interested in orders to

Navy Region Hawaii on Oahu. She gladly accepted the orders and looked forward to what she hoped would prove to be an enjoyable and rewarding tour of duty.

I was one of many chaplains present to greet her at the Honolulu airport, bedecking her in colorful Hawaiian leis. I offered to take her out the next morning to Duke's, a popular downtown restaurant that featured a popular Sunday brunch. When I picked her up following the worship service she attended at the Pearl Harbor Chapel, I was surprised and a little concerned when she said the two senior chaplains conducting the service acknowledged a chaplain from a visiting ship, but failed to acknowledge her even though they knew she was present in the congregation. Unfortunately, in time it became clear that Leila was not going to be integrated into the chapel community and would spend her entire tour assigned to a relatively small and isolated command. Hence, the reason she was never introduced to the congregation upon her arrival was because her seniors had no intention of ever allowing her to conduct services or preach in the Pearl Harbor Chapel.

My three-year tour at MARFORPAC can best be summarized by a quote from *A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens, "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times." The best part of the tour involved my supervisory work with some 150 chaplains assigned to Marine Corps commands that covered an operational area over two-thirds of the earth's surface. My travels in the Continental United States took me as far east as Marine Corps Air Station Yuma in Arizona, and as far west of Hawaii as the Horn of Africa. In addition to meeting with all the chaplains annually at their respective duty stations, I deployed with our command staff to the Democratic Republic of Korea (DROC) for annual war games; to Kenya for a Peace Conference involving eleven African nations; to Laos with a Joint Task Force (JTF) from U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM) in search of remains of personnel killed in action (KIA) during the Vietnam War; and to Bahrain and Kuwait prior to the March 20, 2003 invasion of Iraq. Because all of my prior operational Marine Corps and Navy tours involved deployments to Europe, the Caribbean and Southwest Asia, I now enjoyed spending more time in places like Okinawa, mainland Japan, Thailand and Korea.



With LtGen Fulford, Jr.



LtGen Frank Libutti



BGen Magnus



With ROC Marine Officer

Shortly after my arrival, Lieutenant General Carlton Fulford, Jr., the MARFORPAC Commander with whom I flew to Wake Island in the Pacific, was replaced by Lieutenant General Frank Libutti. What made the first two years of my tour of duty so fulfilling was working for LtGen Libutti and his Deputy Commander, Brigadier General Robert Magnus. Both of these officers were exceptional leaders who were deeply respected and loved by all the officers and enlisted in our command.

“The worst of times” while stationed in Hawaii involved a conflict with senior officers within the U.S. Pacific Fleet (CINCPACFLT) chain of command and the Navy Chief of Chaplains, as well as my relationship with my Roman Catholic Endorsing agent, the Archbishop for the Military Services, U.S.A. My conflict with senior officers within CINCPACFLT and the Navy Chief of Chaplains involved my defense of two female chaplains. The first female chaplain was the victim of abuse and reprisals at Navy Region Hawaii where she worked prior to reporting to Marine Corps Base Kaneohe Bay. The second female chaplain was Leila who, while also assigned to Navy Region Hawaii, was a victim of discrimination, reprisals and a denial of a request for Admiral’s Mast.

Ordinarily, a junior Navy chaplain assigned to a Navy command would never request help from a senior chaplain assigned to a Marine Corps command. However, in this case, two factors impacted my involvement in Leila’s case. One, although I was not assigned to Recruiting Command in 1999, I was the chaplain who was mainly responsible for Leila coming back on active duty. I would never have encouraged her to be recommissioned had I known she was going to be discriminated against and not be given a chance to utilize her training and experience. Secondly, the Navy Chaplain Corps expects every junior chaplain to have a senior chaplain mentor outside of one’s chain of command who provides professional advice related to one’s naval career. When Leila was asked to identify her mentor when she reported aboard, she wrote in my name in so far as I was the only chaplain above the rank of Lieutenant Commander on Oahu she knew at that time.

In the process of defending Leila and the other female chaplain who suffered reprisals in addition to other injustices, I too experienced a reprisal that led the chaplains I was defending to file formal complaints with the Naval Inspector General and the Department of Defense (DoD) Inspector General. Unfortunately, because all three of us were naïve to believe the Navy and DoD investigatory “process” would be impartial and would not bow to rank, we were all disappointed with the final outcome of the long and drawn-out investigation.

My almost three year involvement in the investigation of these cases taught me that many people in positions of authority do not want to address serious problems like rape, sex abuse, discrimination and drug abuse because their revelation, carried out under their watch, could harm their own careers. While some authority figures are successful initially in covering up problems that could threaten their promotions or lead to their firing, it may not be until years later that the misbehavior and their cover-ups become known.

Two friends who reviewed our case documentation, Ken McCabe, an FBI Special Agent in Charge (SAC), and Dave Brahms, a lawyer and former Judge Advocate General of the Marine Corps, both led me to realize the Secretary of Defense was not going to sacrifice the careers of several high ranking naval officers as a result of their cover-ups of injustices suffered by three chaplains. As was the case with Paula Coughlin and the 1991 Tailhook scandal, unless a member of Congress or the media were to become involved and unearth the cover-ups, my friends felt our cases were “dead in the water.”

One of the reasons I took on these cases that put me at odds with a number of senior Navy officers, the majority of whom were involved in covering up the injustices the women experienced, was due to the example provided by senior officers like General Tony Zinni with whom I had the privilege of serving. When Tony was a Colonel in Okinawa and they were going to sacrifice a junior officer under his command for a round that impacted off base in a civilian neighborhood, he came forward and said, “I’m in charge of this northern base and I’m

ultimately responsible for what happens. No one was hurt and we corrected the problem so it won't happen again. If for political reasons you want to hang someone, hang me." Fortunately, the Commanding General (CG) admired his courage in being willing to sacrifice his career for the Marine Corps Captain and he got the Okinawans to back down. It was this kind of action that inspired me to fight for two junior female chaplains. Unfortunately, in this case, I didn't have a CG to support me in doing the right thing and both the women and I ended up taking the hits.



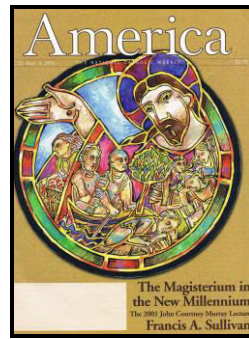
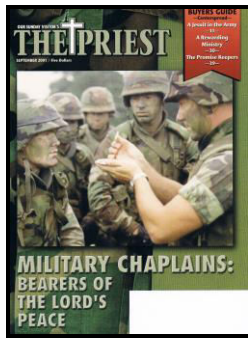
Capt McCabe & LtCol Zinni Gen Zinni at CENTCOM with wife Debbie With General Zinni in 2004

The first female chaplain I defended left the Navy with no benefits but was able to be helped later by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Because of the documented psychological harm she endured while serving on active duty, the VA awarded her compensation in the amount of \$3000 a month for life. While some people might find that to be a generous amount, it is far less than the amount of money that is being given in retirement to the person who abused her and the senior officers who reprimanded her for reporting the abuse.

It was only after Leila filed her formal IG complaint that she was allowed to be transferred and escape the discrimination and reprisals she was forced to endure for two years at Navy Region Hawaii. She reported as Command Chaplain to Naval Support Activity in Souda Bay, Crete and I was later transferred to Naval Base Ventura County (NBVC) with Additional Duty Orders to the 31st Seabee Readiness Group where I served under two exceptional Navy officers, Captain Paul Grossgold and Captain James Cowell, Jr. I was able to see Leila for a few days in Crete while I was visiting Seabees who were deployed and engaged in construction work in Rota, Sigonella and Souda Bay. After serving in Crete for one year, Leila was later transferred to Headquarters and Service Battalion at Marine Corps Base Quantico, Virginia.

Sexual Abuse and the Archdiocese for the Military Services

In addition to my conflict with line and Chaplain Corps flag officers whose reprisals were carried out with impunity, I also experienced a conflict with my endorsing agent, the Military Archbishop. When he nominated me to be named a Prelate of Honor, I took this nomination as a vote of confidence and a sign that more leadership on my part was expected within the Catholic Church. It was not too long after I was made a monsignor that the Military Archbishop asked me to write an article for *The Priest* magazine that might encourage more priests to become military chaplains. The article, published in their September 2001 edition with a photograph of me on the cover distributing communion in the field to Marines, was entitled, "A Rewarding and Challenging Ministry."



Shortly after submitting this article for publication, I decided to write another article on the priesthood, calling bishops and laity to be more supportive of priests as more and more of them find themselves living alone in rectories often inhabited in the past by two, three or even four priests. To illustrate the potential for health and disciplinary problems that can derive from living alone, I made mention of the disproportionate number of Catholic Navy chaplains who lived alone and who were imprisoned or discharged from the military as a result pedophilia and homosexual behavior when I served as the Deputy Chaplain of the Marine Corps.

A number of people who wrote letters to the editor in response to this article that appeared in the August 27, 2001 edition of *America* magazine seemed to appreciate my point about not expecting one aging priest to be able to provide the same level of service as was provided in the past by more and often younger priests. These responses contrasted with that of the Military Archbishop who forwarded me a letter he endorsed that criticized my article for disparaging the reputation of military chaplains.

It was about five months later that the Archbishop's attorney, a retired Navy Judge Advocate General (JAG) Corps officer, approached me at the annual Catholic Navy Chaplains retreat and inquired when I might be retiring. I couldn't help but ask myself what I had done that was so bad that the Military Archdiocese, with its growing shortage of priests, wanted me to return to my home diocese. The answer to that question was provided a month later when the Spotlight Team at *The Boston Globe* began publishing a series of stories about sexually abusive Catholic priests whose actions were often covered up by church officials. When I wrote my article that was published more than five months before the scandal broke in Boston, little did I realize the true extent of the sex abuse problem I referenced. It was only years later I learned that over 100 Catholic military chaplains were accused or found guilty of abuse before, during or following their military service.

Another issue that contributed to my strained relationship with the Military Archbishop involved his failure to respond to issues I brought to his attention in my capacity as one of the most senior Catholic military chaplains on Oahu. While there were a number of issues I addressed in quarterly reports, letters and emails, there is one in particular that is worth mentioning.

One of the Catholic chaplains stationed in Hawaii at the time was a young priest I recruited years earlier into the Navy Chaplain Candidate program when I coordinated Catholic recruiting while assigned to the Navy Chief of Chaplains Office (1986-89), I was happy to welcome this priest to Hawaii where he was stationed aboard USS PORT ROYAL (CG-73). The priest came to most of the priest gatherings at my home and often talked about having me over to his place and see the great view he had of Waikiki Beach. When an

invitation never materialized after almost two years, I asked another chaplain if he was ever at the priest's home and why he never invited me over even for a cup of coffee. The chaplain stunned me when he said that the priest probably didn't invite me over because he didn't want me to meet his live-in boyfriend.

Even though I never received either an acknowledgement or a response to letters addressing various problems I was encountering on Oahu (mailed in September of 2001 and February of 2002), I wrote the Military Archbishop a letter on May 6, 2002 in which I concluded: "A person, particularly a leader, must take pride in the institution in which he serves. When a Catholic chaplain does not return hospitality because he does not want me to meet his live-in boy friend...how can I feel pride in serving with such Catholic chaplains?" It was my hope that such a letter would have elicited some sort of response, but none was forthcoming.

When months past and I never received one letter, email or phone call from the Military Archbishop or any one of his Auxiliary bishops, I wrote another letter on 7 October 2002 in which I recapitulated what I had written in previous letters and stated: "I have confided in my family, friends and some Catholic chaplains that your lack of support has affected my faith."

It was not long after the Military Archbishop received this letter that he invited me to meet with him at his office in Washington, DC. When I arrived at his office, I was under the impression that he finally wanted to talk about some of the problems that had been occurring on Oahu. I was wrong. Instead of wanting to talk about some of the issues addressed in my correspondence, the Archbishop indicated that I was losing my priest friends (i.e., priests whom I had put on report) and that I might benefit from a psychological evaluation. When it was evident he did not wish to discuss the matters I had raised, I told him that while I felt quite sane, I had nothing to fear in undergoing a psychological evaluation.

Immediately upon returning to Hawaii I called Father Tom Doyle and sent an email to Leila, both of whom advised me not to undergo a psych eval which they saw as something the Military Archbishop wanted to use to discredit me. In response to their advice I sent an email asking the Archbishop to put into writing his reasons for requesting that I undergo a psych eval. No such justification was ever forthcoming.

I was totally scandalized by the failure of the Military Archbishop to address important issues that I believed were being covered up less their revelation harm his chances of being appointed to a more prominent archdiocesan see. The "final straw" that influenced my decision to request a leave of absence from the priesthood came when the Military Archbishop reported in an 18 February 2004 "Chaplains Update" that "As to our Archdiocese, two such cases have come forward where active-duty priest chaplains have been found guilty of engaging in immoral acts with minors." Having been involved in five abuse cases in the Marine Corps in just over a two year period, I could not fathom how he could report that there were only two abuse cases in all branches of the Armed Services throughout the entire history of the Archdiocese for the Military Services, U.S.A. In March of 2011, seven years after the Military Archbishop reported a total of two abuse cases, the Survivors' Network of those Abused by Priests (SNAP) and Bishop-Accountability.org called for an investigation into military chaplains after composing a list of over one hundred Catholic military chaplains who were proven to have abused, or accused of having abused young people before, during or following their military service.

It was three years after I left the priesthood and married that the priest with the live-in boyfriend in Hawaii reported for duty at the U.S. Naval Academy while he was HIV positive and where he preyed on midshipmen, only later to be transferred to Marine Corps Base Quantico where he took sexual advantage of young Catholic Marines. When the Military Archdiocese was contacted after the priest was arrested in 2007 and charged with aggravated assault, indecent assault, fraternization, forcible and consensual sodomy, and conduct unbecoming an officer, archdiocesan officials told reporters they had no idea that the priest was sexually active. While the abusive priest only served two years in prison, he was later arrested in November of 2014 for producing and distributing child pornography for which he faces a life sentence.

Had the Military Archbishop addressed the abusive priest's problems when I first brought them to his attention more than five years before his first arrest, and 12 years before his second arrest, the priest might have been able to have gotten help and military personnel upon whom he preyed would not have been subjected to sexual relations with someone who was HIV positive. Even though the Military Archbishop covered up sexual abuse within the Military Archdiocese, he was still successful in being made a cardinal and appointed to a post in the Vatican where he currently resides.

After serving in the military for over 24 years and dedicating almost 40 years of my life to the Catholic Church, I lost pride in both the military and the priesthood as a result of the failure of military and church leaders to do the right thing. From my perspective, the Chaplain Corps and line officers involved in our abuse, discrimination and reprisal cases were no better than many bishops who covered-up abuse perpetrated by priests under their supervision. I concluded it was time to retire from the military and take leave of the priesthood.

Retreat in Washington, D.C.

After informing the detailer of my wish to retire after two years on station at Naval Base Ventura County (NBVC), I had to decide what I was going to do once I retired. I was working on a book, *The Survival Guide for Marriage in the Military*, that I hoped to publish shortly after I retired and established a residence. To help me further discern what I might do, I flew to Washington, DC where I went on a retreat directed by an old priest friend. In the course of the retreat I went to confession and confessed that living alone was never easy for me and that I was scandalized by how church leaders were handling sexual abuse cases. I also told my friend that the love I felt in my heart for a very special woman made me believe I did not have the gift of celibacy. My plan, I said, was to request a leave of absence from the priesthood following my retirement.

When my friend asked me if I was planning on getting married, I told him if I were dispensed of my vows of celibacy and the woman I loved ever decided that she wanted to marry me, I might want to be married in the "Chapel from the Sea" that I helped to design and build in Coronado. When he asked with whom I was in love, I told him it was Chaplain Leila Havadtoy who was stationed at Marine Corps Base Quantico.

My friend was not supportive at all of my plans to leave the priesthood for two reasons. One, how would he explain my departure from the priesthood after he had told so many people over the years that I would make an outstanding bishop? Two, because he enjoyed a platonic relationship with a former nun, he left me with the impression that I could continue being a priest and might come to enjoy a similar relationship without getting married.

Two parish priests who inspired me to think about the priesthood when I was around 14 years old both had live-in housekeepers like many priests at that time. While most of these relationships were non-sexual, a number of these priests were closer emotionally to their housekeepers than many married husbands and wives. While that may have worked for them, I did not think it was fair for such priests' housekeepers to be curtailed from having children and, upon the death of the priests, to receive no benefits.

In the course of the retreat I also told my friend I was ashamed of the way the Military Archbishop underreported the extent of the abuse of young men by Catholic Chaplains to the National Review Board. Not only did the Military Archbishop want me to leave the chaplaincy after my *America* article referenced the five abuse cases in which I was involved, but he also withdrew the ecclesiastical endorsement of my friend, Dominican Father Tom Doyle, who had been advocating for victims and testifying at abuse trials after U.S. bishops ignored the advice he had given them to address the abuse problem as early as 1985. The priest the Air Force assigned to the base where Tom was supposed to go before the Archbishop withdrew his endorsement was later credibly accused of molesting at least one child of an Air Force member in 2008. The abuse was covered up by the Military Archdiocese and the abusive priest was allowed to resign quietly and go home. Interestingly, before coming on active duty, that priest had also been accused of abusive behavior in his home diocese in Hawaii.

I told the retreat director that the abuse problem was just as bad in our own home diocese of Altoona-Johnstown Pennsylvania where our own bishop reprised against Monsignor Phil Saylor whose truthful testimony at an abuse trial contradicted the testimony given by the bishop. When the diocese lost the case that cost them over \$2 million, Msgr. Saylor was later transferred from a prestigious parish and issued a precept of silence under threat of suspension and excommunication if he were to write or talk about the abuse trial.

In 2015, many years after his retirement, Monsignor Saylor was asked to testify before the Twenty-Seventh Statewide Grand Jury of Pennsylvania that investigated child abuse within the Altoona-Johnstown Diocese. The Grand Jury Report released in March of 2016 noted: "Over many years hundreds of children have fallen victim to child predators wrapped in the authority and integrity of an honorable faith. As wolves disguised as shepherds themselves, these men stole the innocence of children by sexually preying upon the most innocent and vulnerable members of our society and of the Catholic faith." The report also noted how my bishop at that time "failed to protect children" entrusted to his care by placing his "desire to avoid public scandal over the wellbeing of innocent children."

When the Military Archbishop complained to my Bishop in Pennsylvania following the publication of my *America* article and after receiving my communications about sexually active homosexual chaplains in Hawaii, my bishop sent me an email and asked if I might be interested in returning to the diocese as he was in need of a priest to serve as a chaplain at the Pennsylvania State Correctional Institution. I shared this with my friend in the course of the retreat and argued that the Military Archbishop was not going to get rid of me like he did Father Tom Doyle, and my Bishop was not going to send me into isolation as he did Msgr. Saylor. My closing words to my friend as I left his home were, "I will not remain in the priesthood only to leave the military and be shipped off to some prison."

Two months after my retreat, my "friend" ran into the Military Archbishop at the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington and betrayed my confidence by telling him I was planning on leaving the priesthood and was in love with a Protestant Chaplain, Leila

Havadtoy, who was stationed at Marine Corps Base Quantico. It was only a year earlier that a Catholic Chaplain at Quantico married a Navy nurse immediately following his retirement. Determined to thwart similar weddings by other Catholic chaplains; looking for an excuse to get rid of me after my *America* article; and now armed with the name of the chaplain with whom my friend said I was in love, the Archbishop contacted the Catholic Chaplain who replaced the married priest and whose office was across from Leila's at Headquarters and Service Battalion.

Confident that he was going to derail any plans I might have of getting married, the Military Archbishop called my office and told the Religious Program Specialist who answered the phone that he was "an old friend" who wanted to talk with me. When I took the call he said that he learned through reliable sources that I was planning on leaving the priesthood to marry and wanted to know what I had to say. I told him that I would be happy to discuss any plans I might have for the future if he would tell me why he lied to the National Review Board about the extent of the abuse problem among Catholic chaplains in the military. Infuriated by my response, he said that I was suspended from carrying on priestly functions in the military. Because I had less than a week to serve on active duty, the suspension had little effect and was hardly worth appealing. Still, it made me feel both sad and angry.

Retirement: A New Beginning

Following my retirement ceremony, in the course of my cross county trip, I stopped in Fayetteville, Tennessee where I stayed overnight with retired Admiral Frank Kelso and his wife Landess. It was an honor working for Frank when he was the Sixth Fleet Commander and anyone whoever worked for him was not surprised that he was selected to be the Chief of Naval Operations. When I shared with Frank and Landess my love for Leila and my decision to take a leave of absence from the priesthood, Frank later wrote me and said, "Gene,I have always found you to be a very God loving person and I think it's quite understandable that you would like to enjoy life on earth with a wife and children. Jesus never told his disciples they were not allowed to marry and enjoy the blessings of family life."

After driving five days, before arriving at my sister's home in Baltimore, I spent the weekend at the U.S. Naval Academy with a priest friend, Chaplain Miles Barrett. In the course of the visit, Miles said he heard from another Catholic chaplain that I married a Navy nurse in Coronado. I told him if that were true, I would hardly be spending time with him in Maryland instead of with my wife in California.

In the course of the last week in April I was determined to figure out the source of the misinformation about my marriage to a Navy nurse. When I contacted my bishop in Pennsylvania he told me that the Military Archbishop informed him of his decision to revoke my ecclesiastical endorsement based on my plans to marry a Navy Chaplain by the name of Leila Havadtoy in the Coronado Chapel in May. I told him if he or the Military Archbishop had the good sense of contacting the Coronado Chapel, they might discover that I never made plans to marry Leila Havadtoy, some Navy nurse, or anyone in that chapel in May, June or anytime in the near future. I told him further I was disappointed that the Military Archbishop could not come up with a better reason for getting rid of me like he did Tom Doyle. Because he and the Military Archbishop would not miss priests like Tom and myself who exposed the abuse that so my bishops attempted to cover-up, I told him I wished to be granted a leave of absence from the priesthood. He said he would prepare a letter granting my request and have it mailed to my sister's address.

Because my bishop said that I was supposed to be marrying Leila and not some Navy nurse as Miles had indicated, the only person I could think of who might be the source of the rumor was my “friend” who directed my retreat in Washington. When I called him and asked him if he betrayed my confidence and told the Military Archbishop I was thinking of taking a leave of absence from the priesthood following my retirement, he at first denied that he had spoken with the Military Archbishop. However, when I pushed him further, he admitted that he ran into the Archbishop at a liturgical function and he told him that I planned on leaving the priesthood. When I asked him how he could violate the seal of confession, he said what I said about Leila was not covered under the seal because I spoke of my love for her at lunch and not when I had gone to confession. I told him that anything that is shared in the course of a retreat is considered privileged communication. When he said some canon lawyers would differ with that position, I told him we would never be speaking again.

The puzzle was now starting to come together. The Military Archbishop suspended me because he thought I was marrying Leila in the Coronado chapel in May. Because I only made a passing reference to my “friend” about the Coronado chapel where I might get married if I were ever dispensed of my vows, a process that could take a year or more, I had no idea how he was led to believe I was going to marry so soon.

Just as I was in the process of trying to figure out how he came up with Coronado and May as the place and time of my alleged wedding, I received a call from Leila. She said she had just heard that the Military Archbishop had revoked my endorsement and one chaplain said he heard that I married a Navy nurse in Coronado.

I told Leila that while I did not marry a Navy nurse, the Military Archbishop did indeed revoke my ecclesiastical endorsement. Because I had just learned that morning in talking with my bishop in Pennsylvania that the Military Archbishop was led to believe that we were getting married in May in the Coronado chapel, I told her we really needed to get together and talk. We made plans to meet later that evening at a small French bistro on Wisconsin Avenue near Georgetown University.

When Leila arrived, she was looking better than ever. I, however, looked very haggard after my cross country trip and the stress I experienced in dealing with the Military Archbishop and the marriage rumors. Leila wanted to know everything related to my suspension. When I told her about how I confessed my feelings for her to my “friend” who violated my trust, Leila asked how the Military Archbishop could have used confidential information that was shared in the course of a retreat. I told her I thought he had to have had another source, particularly when he told my Bishop that we were getting married in May in the Coronado chapel, something I never mentioned during the retreat or to anyone because it wasn't true.

Leila then said that her supervisory Catholic Chaplain had been acting in a peculiar fashion over the past few weeks. She said, “He reminded me not once, but three times about submitting leave requests early.”

I said, “If he thought you were going to get married, then he might think the leave request could help reveal a date that he could then forward to the Military Archbishop. Did you submit any leave requests?’ I asked.

Leila said, “I requested 10 days of leave at the beginning of May to go home to Milford for my parent's 50th wedding anniversary.”

“That might help explain the May date, but then what led him to feel certain that we were getting married in Coronado?” I asked.

“I listed my parent’s home as my leave address. We couldn’t be home for my parent’s anniversary and have enough time to fly out and get married in California because I have a wedding to perform in the base chapel the day after I get off leave.”

No sooner had she finished her sentence, Leila seemed to have had a “revelation.” She said, “It just came to me – that upcoming wedding – the bride’s name is ‘Susan Coronado’.”

Because Leila had “Coronado” penciled in on her office wall calendar even before she submitted her leave request, I was led to believe that her Catholic supervisor might have been snooping around and communicated to the Military Archbishop that Leila was planning on being in Coronado in May.

When Leila asked what I thought we should do, I joked, “If I’m going to be suspended for planning on marrying you next month in Coronado, then let’s just fly out there, get a license, and run over to the chapel and get married.”

“But what’s this thing about you marrying a nurse?” she asked.

“The only Navy nurse in my life was one I took out for dinner over twenty years ago. I would bet the rumor mill mixed my suspension for allegedly planning on getting married with the Quantico Catholic Chaplain’s marriage last year to a Navy nurse”, I said.

“So, what are you going to do now?” she asked.

“I have already been verbally granted a leave of absence from the priesthood. My plans are to hang out at my sister’s for a while and then decide what to do. My household goods are in storage and I could always move into my home in Coronado once my renters’ lease is up,” I said.

“How about you? What are you up to these days?” I asked.

She said that she was taking a train back to Connecticut for her parent’s 50th wedding anniversary and wondered if I’d be interested in joining them. I told her I’d be honored to go and we left a few days later when she began her leave period.

We decided to spend a few hours in New York City before continuing on to Milford. As we walked up Fifth Avenue we reflected on the seven years we had known one another since we first met in Sicily. We encountered a street vendor who was selling framed black and white photos of Audrey Hepburn from the movie “Breakfast at Tiffany’s.” I couldn’t help but buy Leila a photo of Audrey standing in front of Tiffany’s, not only because she felt jewelry from Tiffany’s was truly priceless, but also because Audrey was one of her favorite actors. We also walked into a bookstore where I bought Leila a book, *Audrey Style*, whose pictures and text captured the inner and outer beauty of this wonderful actor.

When we did happen to reach the corner of Fifth Avenue and 57th Street where Tiffany’s is located, I asked her if she would like to look inside at some of their friendship rings. Taking the elevator to the second floor, we looked at rings that featured small diamonds that

commemorated a certain number of years of friendship. When neither of us found any setting irresistible, we walked away from the display case only to find ourselves in the area containing engagement rings. As Leila was admiring the rings, I walked further down the counter and quietly asked a sales person how long it would take to have a ring ready. She told me if I purchased it today it could be ready the following day. When I returned and Leila asked me what I was inquiring about, I told her I asked if jewelry from Tiffany's did not depreciate as fast as jewelry from other jewelers.

We left Tiffany's and started walking back down Fifth Avenue when we got to the corner of 56th Street and I turned to her and said, "It's now or never. I didn't ask that woman about how the jewelry held its value, I asked her how long it would take to have an engagement ring ready to be placed on your finger."

"But you told me you wanted to go in and look at friendship rings," she said.

"You are my best friend. But what's wrong with a person wanting to marry his best friend?" I asked.

Leila couldn't help but ask, "Are you really sure you know what you're doing?" When she suggested we sit down and talk about it, we went into the Trump Tower where we had a long heart-to-heart talk. When our discussion was over, we kissed, held hands and walked back to the second floor of Tiffany's where Leila selected her engagement ring for which she was measured. We then took the commuter train to Milford where we celebrated the news of our engagement with her parents who embraced me as their future son-in-law.

We returned to Tiffany's the following day where we were ushered into a small room, presented with two glasses of champagne, and ceremoniously given the ring packaged in their distinctive light blue box. We then walked a few blocks down Fifth Avenue to Rockefeller Center where, placing the ring on Leila's finger, I asked her to be my wife.

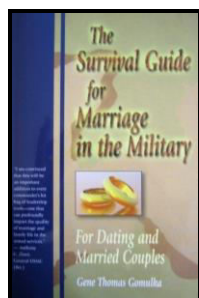


Marriage and Family Life

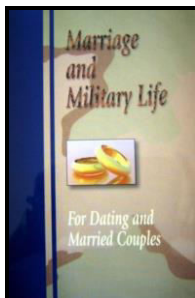
On Saturday, August 7, Leila's father officiated at our wedding in the presence of over 100 family members and friends in the Yale Divinity School Chapel followed by a reception at the Quinnipiac Club in New Haven. The day after the wedding we drove to Quebec for our honeymoon. Before the year was over, we also honeymooned in Italy in the cities of Rome, Florence, Sienna, Verona and Venice.

We lived in Woodbridge, Virginia the first 17 months of our marriage while Leila worked at

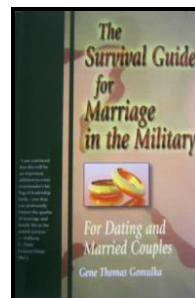
Marine Corps Base Quantico. Having just published my first edition of *The Survival Guide for Marriage in the Military*, as well as a *Marriage and Military Life* relationship inventory, I worked out of a home office filling book orders and writing a military marriage column that appeared weekly on military.com. The first year I sold about 10,000 copies of my works. Book sales increased particularly after Dear Abby endorsed *The Survival Guide* in her weekly column, writing that it "is very well done, easy to read and jargon-free, and although it was written for military couples whose marriages can be subject to extreme stresses, it can provide food for thought to civilian couples as well." When it was clear the book was well received and was helping thousands of military couples, I wrote and published a second edition that included additional advice that stemmed from communications with readers who wrote letters in response to my weekly column.



2004 First Edition



2004 Inventory



2007 Second Edition

Because I basically had a desk job and was not as physically active as I was during my military career, I decided to exercise by purchasing a lawn mower and cutting the grass that surrounded our home. The first day I cut the grass was quite memorable. The sun was shining brightly and the temperature was in the 90s. Before I was half done I thought to myself, *I've become human and I'm no longer divine*. As a priest, particularly when I lived in a parish, there was always someone who cut the grass, cleaned the house, prepared the meals and even made the beds. Now, no longer a priest, it was I who cut the grass, cleaned the house and prepared the meals while my wife worked full time.

As I was cutting the grass, I thought about how lucky I was to be alive. I could have died of cancer, 14 years earlier, never to have know what it was like to be married. I remembered that I also could have died 21 years earlier in 1981 when I was deployed with the 2nd Battalion, 8th Marines. One of my three closest friends in the battalion was our medical officer, Lieutenant Doug Jacobsen. While ashore in Garrucha for an exercise with the Spanish Marines, Doug boarded a helicopter after our commanding officer disembarked, only later to crash and die with the pilot. Owing to a series of events the night before that precluded me from participating in the training, it very well could have been me instead of Doug who died.

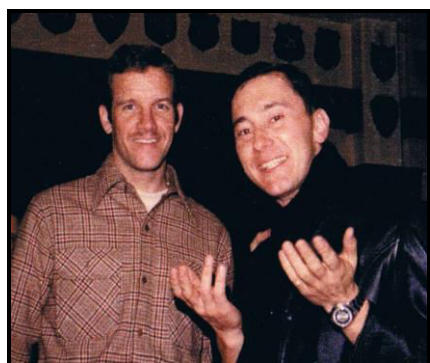
While I was cutting the grass, I also thought about one of the most depressing days of my life. I arrived at the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland around 3:00 in the morning after having been medevaced from the Persian Gulf via Riyadh and the Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany. Because it was the weekend and I had to wait until Monday before having a biopsy to determine the exact nature and extent of what doctors thought was a fast growing cancer, I had no idea if I was going to live or die. All day Saturday I was alone and depressed in my hospital room while outside it was cold and rainy. I was able to call my Mom in Norfolk to let her know that I was medevaced; that the doctors thought I had cancer; and that a biopsy would be performed early in the week to assess my condition.

Around seven o'clock in the evening the door to my hospital room burst open and in

walked my friend Major Dan Keenan and other members of his helicopter crew. Dan, after having served on active duty where he flew CH-53Es based in New River, North Carolina when we met in 1980, was now a civilian airline pilot while still flying heavy lift helicopters in the Marine Corps Reserve based at Willow Grove, Pennsylvania. When Dan heard that I was hospitalized, he filed a flight plan that routed him to Bethesda to “practice medevac procedures.” When he came to my bedside, he brought a basket filled with wine, fruit, candy and condoms. After examining the contents of the basket, I told Dan I had to get better otherwise who would keep him out of trouble.

When Dan returned to his helicopter he did something that ordinarily only takes place in the movies. Knowing where my room was in the hospital, he took off and hovered within sight of my window, offered me a crisp Marine Corps salute, and flew back to Pennsylvania. After his visit and unforgettable farewell, there is no way I could remain sad and lonely.

Dan was only one of hundreds of family members and friends who visited, called or sent cards during my hospitalization. It was another former active duty Marine with whom I served in 2/8, FBI Special Agent Jeff Holmes, who would carry me home following my chemo treatments and lay me in my bed. Because Jeff felt that I never stopped being his chaplain, he gave meaning to the expression, “Once a Marine, always a Marine.”



With Doug Jacobsen in Rota



Dan Keenan on right with copilot



With Jeff Holmes in 2004

These were some of the flashbacks I had while cutting the grass in my “new” life. That life became even more interesting six months after exchanging our vows when our twin children, Luke Alexander and Sasha Grace, were conceived around Valentine’s Day. Like most twins who are born early, they were delivered after eight months gestation on my birthday, 17 October, at the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda Maryland.

It was not long after the birth of the twins that we moved from Woodbridge, Virginia to Groton, Connecticut where Leila was assigned to a command that supported some 20 submarines homeported at Naval Submarine Base New London. Leila’s parents, Alex and Magdalene, lived only an hour away in Milford, Connecticut. We enjoyed visiting them as much as they particularly enjoyed playing with their grandchildren.



Proud parents of not one, but two miracles



Papa and Luke



Grandma and Sasha

It was during our time in Connecticut that I met with the Bishop of Norwich to discuss applying for a dispensation of my vows of celibacy. When I recounted the facts of my case, he assured me that I would be assisted in applying for a dispensation. After waiting a few weeks when no assistance was forthcoming, I contacted some of my friends who knew the bishop and I shared with them what I had recounted in the course of our meeting. One priest friend said no bishop would prepare a dispensation request containing incriminating evidence against another member of the hierarchy, nor would the Vatican want to process such a request. After seeing how successful Cardinal Joseph Bernardin was in leading most people to believe he was innocent of the abuse charges brought against him by Steven Cook in 1993, I concluded that any attempt to apply for a dispensation would be futile.

During Leila's three year tour of duty in Groton I realized I could not work as a publisher and author while at the same time care for infant twins. Because Leila and I grew up in homes where our moms took care of us while our fathers were away at work throughout the day, we did not want to place Luke and Sasha in a child care center for more than once or twice a week. Even though I was not excited about changing the twins' diapers and performing other household tasks, I came in time to realize that they would become more independent as they grew and a day would come when I would feel sad that they could get along well without my help.

Few dads have the opportunity to spend so much time with their small children as I have had. At the same time, Leila's greatest pain as a working mom is not to have been at home with Luke and Sasha particularly prior to their schooling. When we lived in Groton up until they just turned three, I looked forward to the day when they would no longer use diapers. Once Sasha mastered the technique, Luke was quick to follow. That learning experience marked the beginning of an endless series of lessons that Leila and I would teach the twins.

When we moved to California and enrolled the twins in an excellent pre-school program, we would ride back and forth to school every day on our bikes. Leila and I were proud when their pre-school teachers said both twins were extremely bright and got along very well with their classmates. We were also happy to befriend some of the parents whose children were enrolled in the same program.

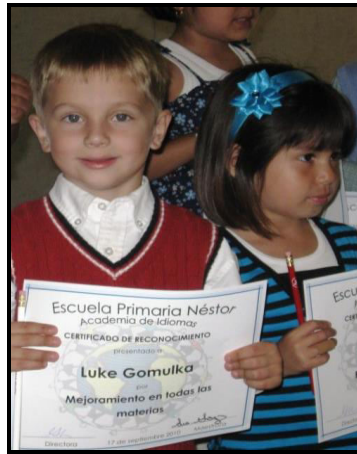
Because Leila and I grew up in homes where we were exposed to foreign languages at a young age, we decided that Sasha and Luke could benefit greatly from learning Spanish particularly between the ages of four and seven. When they started kindergarten two months before they turned five, we enrolled them in the Nestor Language Academy, a charter school where classes between kindergarten and second grade are taught exclusively in Spanish. I

worked hard with them in learning their lessons and doing their homework. I developed learning games that in time I played one day a week with all of the children in their class. I also developed tests I had them take prior to testing administered in class. When they completed kindergarten, Sasha scored the highest in reading comprehension, and Luke scored the second highest among all 125 kindergarten students in their school.

One week after the twins completed kindergarten I flew with them to Quebec City where they were enrolled in a five week (9 am to 4 pm) French speaking day camp. Because there was no formal language learning associated with the program, I prepared French lessons during the day that they completed in the evenings. Leila, who studied French in college, was able to take leave and join us for two weeks. By the time we left Quebec, the twins mastered many of the subjects in French that they learned in kindergarten in Spanish (e.g., days of the week, months of the year, telling time, counting from 1 to 100, etc.).



Biking to Graham Preschool



Luke's kindergarten award



Twins at summer camp in Quebec City

One of the important lessons I learned about fatherhood is that children can learn so much more if their parents help them with their homework and read books to them in the evening or at bedtime. Unfortunately, many parents do not have as much time to spend with their children as I have owing to their work schedules. This is one of the real advantages of having children later in life, particularly when one parent is already retired.

Living on the West Coast only two hours south of Hollywood, we were invited to a free screen test to determine if Luke and Sasha might have some acting or modeling potential. In time they were enrolled in the John Robert Powers acting and modeling school and later offered a contract by the BMG Model and Talent Agency with offices in Los Angeles, Chicago, New York and Miami. Even if the twins do not become successful in this very competitive industry, we feel the training and experience they are gaining is helping them to become more disciplined and mature.



Our BMG Models

Not only are children a real blessing, but it is also a blessing to be married to a spouse who makes you a far better person than you would be if you were to remain single. This is just one of the many reasons I submitted Leila's name for the 2012 Military Spouse of the Year award. Even though most of the people whose names are submitted for this award are civilian wives of active duty personnel, I argued that being an active duty wife and mom is more challenging than being a spouse who, while often separated from her husband, can still enjoy the company of her children. I wrote:

“Unlike many military spouses that can enjoy daily bonding with their new born children, Leila was required to return to her post within six weeks of giving birth to Sasha and Luke. If the pain that comes with being separated from one's newborn children was not hard enough, within a month of returning to work we packed up our household goods and moved north in the middle of winter to the Submarine Base in Groton, Connecticut. Not once during that entire move did Leila complain about how hard it is to be an active duty military spouse and mother.... After having served on active duty for twenty-four years, I am proud to say that a man could not ask for a more loving and supportive wife. Also, our twin children could not ask for a more loving and caring mom....One of Leila's favorite role models is Audrey Hepburn who said, 'A woman's true beauty is not in her figure, in the way she dresses, in the clothes she wears, or in the way she does her hair. A woman's beauty is seen in her eyes, because they are the window to her soul, the place where love dwells.' What struck me about Leila when we first met were her eyes. What makes them her most important asset is not their deep blue color, but rather the fact that those beautiful eyes have always looked for good in others. If you were to look into Leila's eyes and were fortunate enough to gain a glimpse of her soul, full of love for her family and the country she serves, then I am confident you would confirm her as the 2012 Spouse of the Year.”

In addition to being thankful for a loving wife and two wonderfully talented, affectionate, beautiful and intelligent children, I am also grateful that we are blessed with the gifts of family and friends. From the time that Lisa (Zinni) and Michael Hoess hosted a baby shower for us in their home at which Leila's parents, Jean and Dan Brannon, the Bartolomeas and other friends attended, Leila and I knew that the twins Leila was carrying would need godparents, relatives and friends to complement the love that we would provide. Sasha's godparents,

Debbie Hayle and Rich Haas, along with Luke's godparents, Sue Donnel and Ken McCabe, are not only excellent role models, but they have kept in touch with the twins even though most of them are thousands of miles away. Christmas and birthdays are exciting times for Sasha and Luke when they open their presents and are reminded how blest we are to have so many wonderful relatives and friends who share in our family's love.



With godmother Debbie



Birthday party with Betty and George Kleban



With Joan Ludwig

I loved being a priest and now I love being a husband and a dad. One reason I regret the Church has not restored the almost 1200 year tradition of optional celibacy is because I believe being a husband and a father provides insights that celibate living does not offer. While not all priests would find their ministry enhanced were they to marry, I believe Catholics would be better served if the Church had both celibate and married priests.

In May of 2011, Australian Bishop John Morris was forced to retire by Pope Benedict XVI because he had the temerity to suggest in a cautiously worded 2006 Advent pastoral letter that the catastrophic priest shortage should prompt the church to consider "ideas" that are being discussed nationally and internationally that include ordaining married men and women. If Benedict did not resign and I were still a priest, might I be suspended for echoing in writing and preaching what Bishop Morris wrote in his pastoral letter?

It has yet to be seen what decision Pope Francis will make in regard to making priestly celibacy optional. When he was the Archbishop of Buenos Aires, a year before his papal election, the former Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio suggested in an interview that celibacy "is a matter of discipline, not faith." During the interview, in speaking about a girl he met when he was a seminarian while attending his uncle's wedding, Bergoglio said "I was surprised by her beauty, her intellectual brilliance...and, well, I was bowled over for quite a while...When I returned to the seminary after the wedding, I could not pray for a week because when I tried to do so, the girl appeared in my head. I had to rethink what I was doing."⁸

For over thirty years I was called "Father," a title I appreciated and was proud of particularly prior to the sexual abuse crisis. Even after I was named a Monsignor, I continued to use the title "Father" because of its scriptural and theological significance. Despite my fondness for the title and joy I experienced in being a priest, I believed in my heart that I could be a better human being if only I could share the love of a wife and children. It was after I married and the twins were born I discovered that the titles of my past – "Father" – "Monsignor" – "Captain" – all paled in significance to "Daddy."

⁸ Tracy Connor, "Pope Francis spoke of being 'dazzled' by girl, possible change of celibacy rule," *NBC News* (March 20, 2013).