

Prayer of St Francis – Respecting Life by Supporting Our Service Men and Women

"Grant that I may not so much seek...to be understood as to understand"

We are called by the Catholic Church to pray for and promote domestic and international peace. However, the Church also acknowledges that nations have a legitimate right of self defense (Catechism of the Catholic Church). There are many evils which accompany war including death and injury of combatants and civilians, displacement of populations, political instability, and destruction of lives and property. War is sometimes a necessary but grave step which must be taken to protect lives and national security; at the same time, we should pray and work for peace.

"Those who are sworn to serve their country in the armed forces are servants of the security and freedom of nations. If they carry out their duty honorably, they truly contribute to the common good of the nation and the maintenance of peace" (Catechism of the Catholic Church). Our service men and women and their families make incalculable sacrifices to promote lasting peace and justice and to preserve freedom. Service members spend long months away from home and loved ones, living in difficult conditions. They risk their lives. Many are injured or permanently disabled and too many make the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom. Our military service members witness unspeakable horrors of war and many are forever changed as a result. The toll on their physical well being, mental health, relationships, and life paths is enormous. Reintegrating into civilian society can be difficult for our returning Vets. While most make the adjustment, many Vets experience lifelong disabilities, mental health problems, unemployment and homelessness.

Our service members and veterans from all our Nation's wars and from peacetime service deserve our prayers and support. The Prayer of St. Francis calls us to strive to understand and support these heroes. Some ways we can do this are: to make a point of thanking service members and their families for their contributions; help military families at home; send packages to those overseas; hire returning vets. We can also strive to become informed about the issues facing our past and present service members. The U. S. Congress and the State of Minnesota are both currently conducting hearings on veterans' issues. Our faith's call to respect life challenges us to support governmental action to justly meet the needs of our past and present service members. — Social Justice Committee —