



Cowlitz Chaplaincy

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*A non-profit organization serving Emergency Service Responders
and Citizens since 1983*

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Chaplain Mario Gambaro 1-H-8

The Word that's Far Beyond Us

A list of the most expressive words in the English language was once compiled by a dictionary publisher.

Among the words were:

“**Alone**” – the most bitter word

“**Death**” – the most tragic

“**Revenge**” – the most cruel

“**Forgotten**” – the saddest

“**No**” – the coldest

“**Love**” – the most beautiful

“Love” is such a beautiful word that the apostle Paul wrote an essay about it in the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians.

When Paul listed the fruits of the spirit, he began with love as though that were a kind of foundation for all of the other virtues he mentioned.

Although love is a beautiful word, it is also a hard word... at least to live by.

Jesus said, ***“Greater love has no man than this, that a man may lay down his life for his friends.”***

That is a kind of love most of us may never know about. Not many of us will be called upon to die for our friends.

Another time Jesus called upon his disciples to love their enemies. Just try to wrap your mind around that command and live it to its full measure.

How about a stranger?

Can we love a stranger?

Can we show them compassion?

There are those among us that do!

Our emergency service personnel do! We have Deputies, Officers, Fire Fighters, EMS personnel, Search and Rescue personnel and Corrections officers that many times place themselves at risk to save lives. Many times for a stranger, often for a friend, and sometimes for their enemies.

These men and women who serve their communities are dedicated to service and are willing, if necessary, to risk their safety for the sake of others.

Is there a lesson to be learned from our emergency responders?

Our responders are dedicated to the mission... they are focused on the task at hand.

Recently I was able to participate and observe 100's of responders in a mission of compassion.

Their mission was recovery of those who were lost in the Oso/Darrington mud slide in Snohomish County. The response from strangers to those communities was overwhelming, not only to us but to the communities of Arlington, Oso and Darrington.

Asked, “Where is God in all of this?” My reply has to be... In the response and in those responding.

In the Loggers, Oso and Darrington Fire departments, the Snohomish County Deputies, The Washington State Patrol who were first on scene.

In the over 100 fire agencies who sent personnel, in the Red Cross volunteers, The Northwest Disaster Relief volunteers, The National Guard and Army units, The Chaplain corps that responded from Green Cross, Disaster Relief, Red Cross, and Washington State Patrol.

God was in the response of those who showed compassion and love for those communities

Chaplain Mario





Chaplain Tom Haan 1-H-15

The Ministry of Presence

This year I am reflecting on thirty years as an ordained minister. I cannot believe so many years have gone by, but the Lord has taken me on a journey that I could have never anticipated.

In 1984 I was ordained in Madison, Wisconsin. I was twenty-six years old and the congregation was filled with many highly educated and talented people. I was called to that congregation because they thought I would be a good teacher and preacher of God's word.

The congregation only had three people over 65 years old. It was a young and vibrant group, and I baptized 48 babies in 48 months as the pastor. It was an exciting time in my life, and I dove into my work with my whole heart.

I will never forget July 19, 1987. It was a Sunday morning and I arose to put the final touches on my sermon and the worship service. I was going through my normal routine

when the telephone rang. It was only 7:00 a.m. so I thought it must be important. The caller was an elder of our congregation and he called to tell me a young man in our congregation who was stationed in Florida with the Navy was killed the night before in a motorcycle accident. His name was Greg, and I knew Greg well. He was just a couple of years younger than me, and we played softball together the previous two summers. I was stunned. I really did not know what to say. No one in the congregation had died in the previous three years, certainly nothing close to this tragedy had happened in my short time as a minister.

I told the elder I would go over to his parent's house after the worship service, but as soon as I hung up the phone I began to have second thoughts. My head was spinning. I did not want to let anyone or the congregation down at that moment, but I was unclear what to do. I decided to call my father who was a pastor in Minnesota at the time. I knew he would be going through the same Sunday morning routine as me. After I told him what happened he said to me, "Tom, get dressed as quickly as you can and get over to that house. Don't worry about your sermon. You will need to tell your council before church, and after you tell the congregation at the beginning of the service, no one will remember anything about your sermon."

So I got ready as fast as I could and went over to the family home. When I walked through

the door, the elder who called me was there with the grieving parents and Greg's siblings. Everything I thought about saying seemed trite and even insulting to their grief. I remember not saying very much at all. When I prayed with them I just remember asking for the Lord to be present and walk with the family through this horrible time.

I remember what I said at the funeral, but I don't remember much else that I said or read from the Bible. I visited with the family at least once every day that week, but I mostly listened to their thoughts and feelings. On Tuesday I went with the parents to the funeral home to view Greg's body. I was holding mom on my right and dad on my left. As we walked into the room and they saw their precious son in the casket with his dress blue uniform on, they both collapsed in my arms and pain shot through my shoulders as if my arms were going to be torn off.

Several months later the elders were going to report on a visit they made to these parents that was part of a yearly ministry of our congregation. I was concerned the parents would not be happy with my lack of words and instruction. To the contrary, the parents were very happy with my ministry to them. They reported to the elders that they were glad I did not try to talk them out of their grief, answer their questions, or change their thoughts and feelings. "Pastor Tom was just with us every step of the way and has never shied away from us," they said.

This tragic situation was a big lesson for me. I later read somewhere, “No one cares what you know until they know that you care.” This is very true.

Perhaps you shy away from people in their grief because you do not know what to say to them. That is much more of an asset than a liability. The best thing you can do is go to them and be present with them in their grief. Let them do the talking, and you focus on listening to them and bringing the presence of God to them by your willingness to be present with them.

Chaplain Tom Haan



Chaplain Doug Fields 1-H-16

We made it!! Once again another successful Breakfast & Auction. The last three months has been a blur of activity as the entire chaplains team has focused on putting together this Breakfast. We have been on “fundraising” overload. And it

has paid off as so many of you have expressed your generosity and support through sponsorships, donations, by participating in the auction and by signing up to become monthly partners with us. I cannot sing enough praises!

As I was reflecting, I was drawn back to an event that reminded me of the “reason” for our mission and the impact that we have and that you share with us as partners in our mission. Several weeks ago during my rotation I was called out to a possible SIDS death of a 15 month old young girl in the wee hours of the morning. I remember so vividly the shock, the pain and the tears of the family as it became apparent that the young girl was not going to be revived, even with the professional help of the police, fire, and medic crews that treated her and transported her to the hospital. It was a very emotional time with the family that night, at the hospital and later in the day as I met to offer support, information and comfort. I appreciated the opportunity to minister to that family. Later on I was able to attend the funeral and offer the support of my presence.

What I was impacted the most was the opportunity and honor that I was able to participate with our emergency responders in the hours after that call. After attending the family at the hospital and arranging to visit later on, I realized the need to focus attention on the emergency responders. It was literally 2 or 3 in the morning, but I called in another chaplain (Mario) and spent significant time with the awesome

firefighters and medics at Cowlitz Dist. 2, station 21 and with the dedicated officers working the overnight shift at Kelso Police Dept. We also checked in on our compassionate and efficient dispatchers who are the first voice of help and hope that a person in crisis hears when they need help. What impressed me the most during this time of processing the experience (the technical term is “defusing”) was the professionalism of both fire and police as well as the sense of compassion that was demonstrated by both groups in their own way as they shared the impact of this call on their own hearts. In the midst of a highly “charged” and chaotic situation, they responded efficiently and did everything right regardless of the outcome and yet both groups were filled with so much compassion that there were lots of tears that night. It was very humbling. I was so blessed to be on “Holy Ground” that night as I was privileged to walk beside our emergency responders and to affirm them in their jobs and share appreciation and thanks for knowing that our community is blessed with such dedicated servants. This is what our mission is. This is what we as chaplains are called to do. And this is what your support allows us to be able to do.

Thank you for that privilege.

Chaplain Doug Fields





Charity Golf Scramble

To Benefit and Support

Cowlitz Chaplaincy

DATE: SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 20
PLACE: LONGVIEW COUNTRY CLUB
TIME: 9:00 A.M. SHOTGUN START
SEPTEMBER 20th, 2014

MEN'S GROUPS—LADIES' GROUPS—
MIXED GROUPS

COST \$95.00 PER GOLFER

Includes:

*Breakfast / Golf / Cart / Range Balls
Scoring / BBQ Lunch
Prizes / Raffles / Mulligans*

SAVE THIS DATE!