



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
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IN REPLY REFER TO:
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From: The Chaplain of the Marine Corps, 2 Navy Annex RM 1055,
Washington DC 20380-1775
To: All USMC Flag Officers/SESers
Subj: THANK YOU AND GOD BLESS YOU

Colleagues,

On the 23rd of June I will fleet back over to the Navy side and take the helm as the Chief of Navy Chaplains. You should all have your invitations by now and I hope those of you in the D.C. area will be able to share in the Change of Office for the Navy Chaplain Corps. Prior to leaving the "green" side (though I could never really leave you guys), I wanted to let you know how meaningful and rewarding the past 33 months have been. Serving as Chaplain of the Marine Corps has been an incredible privilege!

It's no secret that our Chaplains love Marines. I hope it was obvious to all of you that the Chaplain of the Marine Corps really loves Marines. Serving with the "Nations Finest" is such a privilege and Marine Corps leadership throughout the Fleet has been extremely supportive. Whether visiting our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan or right here at the National Naval Medical Center (Bethesda), they are motivating, inspirational and focused. Most of you have heard my story about Cpl James Wright. When I first met the Cpl he was lying in his hospital bed with both hands missing and bandages covering his wrists. An RPG had taken his weapon and his hands at the same time. As we talked, he asked me if I could help him with a couple of issues. "First", he asked, "don't let the Commandant discharge me". I knew that was a tough one with both hands missing. "Secondly," he continued, "I want hooks for hands. I don't want those new fangled hands that move a little and look like big hands, I want old-fashioned hooks for hands." I asked him why and he smiled and said, "When doing the PFT, you can do pull ups until you drop. With hooks for hands I can hang there all day and set a new record for Marine Corps pull ups." Marines never quit! They are always making the best out of every situation. A few months later, Cpl Wright worked the hook on his right hand and turned the page in the Order of Service and read the "Marine Corps Prayer" at our Marine Corps Worship Service in the National

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Cathedral. It was an incredibly moving moment in our service. Now a Sergeant, James Wright is one of so many Marines I've met who by their very presence command honor and respect. This great young Marine represents so many of our Marines who come through Bethesda.

As I visited our Marines and Sailors in Iraq over this past Easter, I told them I brought a message to them from my five grandchildren. I told them my grandchildren wanted me to tell them "thank you" for allowing them to live in freedom from fear. My grandkids love going to the mall, they love going to restaurants, they love going to the movies, they love going to water and amusement parks...and they are so glad they don't have to be afraid when they go to these places. They don't have to be fearful or anxious that someone is going to blow them up or gun them down. And they know it's because the United States Marine Corps is playing the enemies of freedom on their home field and not on ours. America loves Marines!! Even in light of the challenges of recent days, while most in our nation respects all our uniformed services, they really respect the Marine Corps.

Evelyn and I will always be grateful for the time we had to dwell in your presence. Our lives have been enriched by getting to know you better and we hope in some small way we have been a blessing in return. As you continue to serve God and country so faithfully, you will remain in our prayers and in our hearts. May God continue to bless each one of you and your families, this great nation, and the United States Marine Corps!!!

Semper Fi,



R. F. BURT

Chaplain of the Marine Corps