

Remarks on the Occasion of My Military Retirement

October 1, 2016—Thank you. Allow me to say just a few brief words of thanks to all who have joined us tonight. But before I do, I want to assure my priest friends who are here that it is still appropriate, even though I'm now retired, to address me as **Father Colonel** in public and in private!

My first thanks to Almighty God, for the privilege to serve as a priest and the added privilege to serve as a military chaplain for these past 36 years. It has been a journey of faith and inspiration for which I am ever grateful.

My sentiments of gratitude to **my father**, here with us tonight, the **real "father Marciano,"** who, in January, will be 93 years young, and to **my mother** who left us almost 26 years ago but who we know is with us every day. And to **my brother Al**, who has been and always will be a best friend and inspiration to me. May I add he is my **older** brother, too!

To **my family** who has supported me with love at each endeavor, and with special thanks to those who participated in this Mass offered for our brave men and women of the military: **Courtney and Matthew and Chris.**

I am very grateful for those who made this Mass and military ceremony such a great event: **Father Brig. Gen. (Alphonse) Stephenson**, our presiding officer; **Msgr. (Mark) Rowan**, our preacher and my former and **only** Irish friend; for their travels from far away to be here tonight: **my brother priests** and colleagues in ministry and **my fellow military chaplains.** A special word of thanks to **Father Chaplain Capt. (David) Thurber**, our master of ceremonies; and **Msgt. Rhonda Coleman** who keeps the entire second floor of Joint Force Headquarters on track as best she can!

To **Bryan Barrette, our choir, and many musicians**, for their excellent music each week and for their extra hard work with this military piece, and especially to **my nieces, Katie and Mary** for inspiring us with my favorite song, "The King of Love My Shepherd Is."

Now, speaking of shepherds, what a grace it has been to serve as a shepherd to this great parish and school where I am privileged to be pastor, and to serve those who guard our freedoms: both those inside these sacred walls tonight and those stationed around the globe holding high the lamp of freedom for all the world to

see. Our nation, the greatest on earth, brings forth our brightest and our best and hands them a task that asks of them their lives and still, they raise their hand and pledge the oath to keep us safe.

As a chaplain, protecting one of the very first and most important foundations of our republic—the freedom of religion—I have seen the **goodness** of people here and around the globe and I thank God every day for the privilege that has been mine. My prayer tonight and every day until my final prayer is uttered, is that God will continue to bless America—through all of you.

Thank you, God Bless you and may God Bless America.