



# ACCSS Associated Chaplains in California State Service

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When considering what might be appropriate for a newsletter for California State Chaplains, who for the most part are part of CDCR, I believe a word of encouragement is in order. But, my dear chaplain friend, this encouragement may come at you from just an odd slant or direction that you may not see it as “an encouragement for you.”

More specifically, I am just five months from facing retirement – giving up over 32 years of something I have loved, have hated, have stressed over and have enjoyed a sense of gratification from.

My career as a Protestant State Chaplain began in 1985 at Chino State Prison where I at one time was the only chaplain for a prison having 5 yards and over 5,000 men. Grant you, that period was ever so brief, but it was there. I have enjoyed the fellowship of some truly gifted partners in chaplaincy and have appreciated each for their talents – even those who were a bit hard to get along with.

In 1993 I was blessed with the opportunity of being the initial chaplain on staff for the opening of North Kern State Prison in Delano where I spent the first 6 months working alone until the arrival of the Catholic Chaplain, and then later our Muslim and Jewish Chaplains – along with the Native American Spiritual Leader. All fine individuals in their own right.

In 1999 I left the work of correctional chaplaincy and entered into the Department of Developmental Services in the community of Porterville. Here I embarked upon a new learning curve as I had to adapt what I knew as an institutional Protestant Chaplain to fit into the confines of a people who were challenged in every level imaginable.

Now facing retirement this coming December from an occupation and calling that gives me a sense of who and what I am, and the new challenges of learning to cope with a new phase in life, I look back and know that through it all I have been blessed.

Yet, many of our brother and sister chaplains don't share those sentiments as they struggle with job related tensions and issues that would drive any non-religious person over the brink. There are the worries about the continued evolution and change in the way the State views the work of State Chaplaincy – and many may find those changes untenable and feel as if they are being pushed to the breaking point.

Take heart, my brothers and sisters. By God's help you will be able to get through anything that may come your way. I didn't say you would necessarily appreciate it, but you will get through the evolutionary changes that are sure to come.

Of course it never hurts to have a good “work ethic” to sustain your efforts. As the well-worn adage passed along to me by my aged father who lived on his own from the age of 12, during the bleak depression years of America, lasting from 1929 to 1939, said, “*An honest day’s work for an honest day’s wages.*”

I have learned that while legislators may not be against California Chaplaincy, they are not going to stick their necks out for us also. We suffer from *Benign Neglect*. It is our duty as religious representatives to put forth the best possible moral and ethical image possible.

So in closing, I can merely say, “Support those ACCSS Chaplain Officers who work on your behalf to bring about a better representation of all state chaplains.”

In the words of a simple 13<sup>th</sup> century Italian-born monk who so aptly stated in a prayer:

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.  
Where there is hatred, let me bring love.  
Where there is offense, let me bring pardon.  
Where there is discord, let me bring union.  
Where there is error, let me bring truth.  
Where there is doubt, let me bring faith.  
Where there is despair, let me bring hope.  
Where there is darkness, let me bring your light.  
Where there is sadness, let me bring joy.

O Master, let me not seek as much  
to be consoled as to console,  
to be understood as to understand,  
to be loved as to love,  
for it is in giving that one receives,  
it is in self-forgetting that one finds,  
it is in pardoning that one is pardoned,  
it is in dying that one is raised to eternal life.

*St. Francis of Assisi*

*Submitted by Richard Jordan, Protestant Chaplain, Porterville Developmental Center*