



**We are
Called**

TO HEAL. TO UNITE. TO JUSTICE.

Team Reflection - Huddle

No. 23 Veterans and Health Disparities

People with a military service background have a shared experience, often accompanied by strong bonds. Veterans of all types carry a distinctive burden than their civilian counterparts, and it shows in health outcomes. Researchers find “the effects of military service on physical and psychological health, especially after extended overseas deployments, are complex.” [23.1] The CDC reports veterans are significantly more likely to have two or more chronic diseases, such as diabetes, heart disease, and high blood pressure, among other conditions. Moreover, veterans experience higher rates of serious mental illness, are more likely to be older, and disability is associated with their time of military service. [23.2]

The U.S. Armed Forces has also long supported the faith lives of its members. Catholic priests and chaplains of various religious traditions are among the service personnel.

Emil Kapaun was a Catholic priest and U.S. Army Chaplain born in the small Czech farming community of Pilsen, Kansas in 1916. He served the troops in World War II throughout Burma and India as well as South Korea after invasion by the North. Fr. Kapaun endured seven months in a prison camp after being captured by a Chinese army, caring for fellow prisoners by nursing the sick and wounded, stealing food for the hungry, washing soiled clothes, and encouraging them with humor and prayer. Fr. Kapaun fell ill himself and died May 23, 1951. Two years later, surviving Prisoners of War were released, and supporters have now advanced the cause to canonize him as a Catholic saint for his heroic courage, service, and care for others. [23.3]

Combat experiences forge a special bond among veterans. The general civilian population can scarcely grasp the trauma on the one hand, and the deep connections among the soldiers on the other. When that ends and soldiers return home, the transitions carry a mix of relief and tension. Figures like Emil Kapaun show the great value in extending and sustaining care for veterans for their lifetime.

Consider

- Who are the veterans in my life? Do I know veterans in my workplace or neighborhood? What are my attitudes or biases about veterans?

We are Called

TO HEAL. TO UNITE. TO JUSTICE.



- What do I know about the experiences of veterans?
- How does my hospital or system support the health and well-being of veterans?

Let us pray together,

Almighty and Eternal God, look with love upon our men and women in uniform and protect them in their time of need. Give them health and stability and allow them to return to their loved ones whole and unshaken.

Grant strength and peace of mind to the Veterans who have given their best for the country they love. Support them in infirmity and in the fragility of old age. Teach us to remember their sacrifices and to express our gratitude.

Adapted from the [Prayer of the Archdiocese](#) for the Military Services, USA

[23.1] <https://www.webmd.com/men/news/20120801/cdc-military-veterans-report-poorer-health>

[23.2] https://www.va.gov/HEALTHY/HEALTHY/docs/Social_Determinants_Fact_Sheet_V2-0.pdf
On this pg: https://www.va.gov/HEALTHY/Publications_and_Research.asp

[23.3] Catholic Diocese of Wichita: <https://catholicdioceseofwichita.org/father-kapaun/>