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Weekly Newsgram - September 19th 2018

FBI chaplain says his role is to be an "agent of God"

[Elise Harris Sep 14, 2018](#) SENIOR CORRESPONDENT



NEW YORK - When Monsignor Geno Sylva started as a chaplain for the Federal Bureau of Investigation, his job was described at a training session in a way that stuck with him: that as chaplains, their task is to be "agents for God."

Though he doesn't wear a badge or dig into case files, Sylva dons his white priestly collar and black clerical attire when he goes to his office in New York's Federal Plaza, where he is recognized as someone employees can come to for spiritual and emotional backup, or if they just need someone to talk to.

"Our women and men deal with such intentional evil on a daily basis, so if we as chaplains can represent intentional goodness from God, that's what we try to do," Sylva told Crux during a sit-down interview from his New York office.

"We're not psychiatrists, we're not psychologists," but "(we) are agents for God here," he said, explaining that his day-to-day work can basically be boiled down to four things, the first of which is just being present.

Calling it the "ministry of presence," Sylva said that when he walks into the Federal Building every Wednesday, which is his one routine day at the office, he visits each squad just to say 'hi' and make contact so people can get to know him, and so he can better understand the bureau's culture.

Sylva is one of just 130 FBI chaplains of all faith denominations serving throughout the United States. The bureau first began enlisting chaplains in 1991, and what has now become the Chaplain Program is overseen by the FBI's Employment Assistance Program (EAP).

Depending on the size of the office, there are typically 2-3 chaplains present in each division. In New York, which is the largest field office, there are six, including Sylva and at least one Jewish rabbi and one Protestant minister. In total, they serve approximately 1,000 agents out of around 13,000 worldwide. Including additional employees, chaplains in New York alone are available to some 2,500 people.

In his experience, Sylva said he has been impressed at how attentive superiors are to the well-being of their employees in the FBI, especially in New York.

"The care they have for the men and women who work in the bureau, to me it's inspiring because the people matter to the bureau," he said, explaining that he often gets calls from busy superiors asking if he can check on someone who seems to be struggling.

Full Story [here](#)



In Memoriam

Mildred A. (Gahrzen) Lamm

wife of Chaplain (Colonel) Harold Lamm, USA, Ret. - MCA member 1974

born October 7, 1928
deceased August 14, 2018
United Church of Christ
Annandale, VA

Executive Director Notes

One of the great pleasures of this position has been in notifying our distinguished chaplains of each of the services of their selections and letting them know what a joy it will be to see them receive their well-earned honor at our Awards Dinner on Tuesday, November 6th at the Sheraton Arlington Hotel. One of the chaplains I had the pleasure of meeting just a few days after my notification call to him, another chaplain I'll be meeting next week and a third chaplain is a colleague and good friend whose name I was delighted to see as the distinguished chaplain of his agency.



I recall my first dinner that I attended last year, and it was exciting then to meet the young laureates at that gathering. It will be even more exciting this year as I have had the opportunity to do the notification call with them for their selection. I look forward to seeing them- and as many of you as possible- at the Awards Dinner, as well as a good number of you at our National Institute that week, and my Army colleagues later that week at the US Army Chaplain Corps Regimental Association later that week.

Registration information for our National Institute will be forwarded to you later this week and included in next week's newsgram. I look forward to seeing you in Arlington in November.

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EDUCATING RURAL CLERGY

by [**JOHN W. KENNEDY**](#) on September 17, 2018



Assemblies of God endorsed chaplain Rusty H. Trubey is out to save lives.

The Veterans Administration chaplain leads two-day workshops in rural areas in an effort to educate community pastors about the troubles facing many of those who have served in the military. The thrust lately is on suicide prevention. Based at the Coatesville Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Pennsylvania, Trubey conducts seminars in parts of the Keystone State, as well as Virginia, West Virginia, and North Carolina.

The highly interactive training includes sessions on the military culture wounds of war; pastoral care for veterans and their families; mental health services and referrals; and building community partnerships.

The neediest veterans aren't necessarily those who have returned recently from Afghanistan or Iraq.

"We see a lot of substance abuse among Vietnam-era vets," says Trubey, who has been at the VA center since 2015. "When they retire, it can exacerbate delayed onset post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms."

Thomas G. Behling, Chaplain Service chief at the Coatesville VA Medical Center, says the connection with pastors is vital.

"A lot of veterans, particularly in the National Guard and Reserve, come from rural communities, unlike those on active duty at a military installation," says Behling, 56. "Many times, concerned about the stigma around depression and not wanting to jeopardize their career, they will go to local clergy for assistance first because they know it will be confidential."

Trubey's instruction, especially the module in which he talks about understanding the military mindset, is eye-opening to many ministers, Behling says.

"War is a significant emotional event," Behling says. "The training helps pastors recognize that families are struggling with reintegration issues."

Trubey, 49, isn't just speaking from theory. He went on active duty right out of high school, and for the past 11 years has been an Army Reserve chaplain. Trubey is one of only two dozen chaplains around the country serving in the community clergy training program. The VA instruction is funded by the Office of Rural Health.

"Pastors don't always understand the complex issues that veterans and their families face," Trubey says. "I'm passionate about building partnerships with pastors and connecting them with important resources in the community."

for full story go [here](#)

Florence Strikes

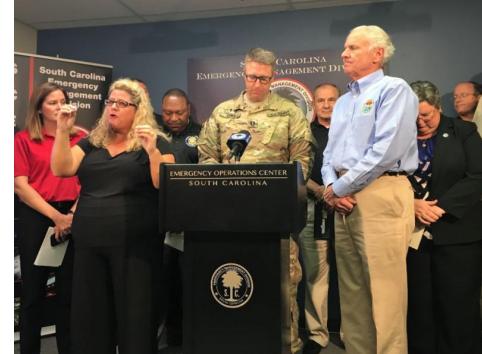
At the beginning of Thursday's news conference about the state's response to Hurricane Florence, Gov. Henry McMaster asked South Carolina National Guard Captain John Denny, a chaplain for the group, to lead the leaders in prayer.

Here's what he said:

"Help us to exercise sound judgment in our preparations for the storm. Help us to be wise in our decisions. Help draw us closer to each other, and strengthen our bonds within our communities, and as a state, though our care for one another.

"Help us to use this event as a rallying point for unity. Help keep us safe oh Lord, help us to honor and praise you even in the midst of a storm. Help us to remember that the same God who create the heavens and the earth is the same God that is with us and will see us through the storm.

"We ask all these things in your gracious name oh Lord. South Carolina strong, South Carolina proud. Amen."



Gov. Henry McMaster's update Thursday on the state's preparations for Hurricane Florence began with Army National Guard Chaplain John Denny leading a prayer for people's safety. It was the first time this week's briefings began with a prayer.

[Seanna Adcox/Staff](#)

Are you a veteran or service member dealing with posttraumatic stress?
Participate in a web-based treatment study.



"Veterans with PTSD don't always feel comfortable seeking in-person therapy. Others may have difficulty fitting in-person therapy sessions in to their busy schedules. This study provides evidence-based therapy online so that sessions can be completed on your own, at home, with an expert PTSD therapist to help support you by phone. If you are a Veteran who has deployed after 9/11 and is dealing with posttraumatic stress, you may qualify for this web-based treatment study."

From the Study Supervisor -

I am a clinical psychologist who works at the Palo Alto VA. I am running a DoD-funded project that provides Veterans with treatment for posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The treatment is an online version of the prolonged exposure therapy (a VA/DoD guideline-recommended intervention) that is provided through an online program with therapist support by phone. There is no cost and Veterans are compensated for completing surveys before and after treatment. Since many Veterans are hesitant to seek treatment in person, or having difficulty getting to treatment because of busy schedules etc., we are trying to find other ways to get care to those in need. Participants must have had a deployed sometime after 9/11, so the program is best suited for more recent Veterans.

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For More Information go [here](#)

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Winter Issue - Chaplaincy and Religion in a Post-Truth World

Articles to be submitted by November 30

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