



Speaking Notes for

Notes d'allocution de

**Brigadier-General/
Le Brigadier-général Guy Chapdelaine**

Chaplain General

L'Aumônier général



**Change of Appointment/
Cérémonie de transfert de fonctions**

Ottawa, ON

26 August / le 26 août 2015

When I hear the song *Laudate Dominum*¹, I hear a call for me to give thanks. The Lord called me and I said, “Here I am, Lord. Send me.” How could I have imagined all those years ago, when I was completing my officer training in Valcartier in 1980, that I would hear God’s call to serve as an ordained minister? And how could I have dreamed, then, that following this call would lead me to this place, here, today, and this call to be Chaplain General to the Canadian Armed Forces?

I stand before you with my heart filled with thanks. I would like to thank my bishop, Monseigneur Luc Cyr², and his predecessors for allowing to pursue such a wonderful ministry as this. A special thanks to the Roman Catholic Military Ordinary, Monseigneur Thériault, for his support throughout my pastoral ministry to the women and men of the Canadian Armed Forces and their families.

The Government of Canada has always counted on our nation’s faith groups to provide religious professionals to serve as chaplains in the Canadian Armed Forces. I would like to thank the faith group leaders in attendance here today for the gift of ministry that you have offered to the military community, the gift of ministry that you continue to offer today, and the gift of ministry that, I know, you will continue to support and offer in the years that lie ahead. You may be certain that we will do everything in our power to ensure that these chaplains that you have shared with us are provided the resources they need to go about their ministry, the support they need to remain connected to their own faith traditions, and that they are returned to you at the end of their service both spiritually healthy and energized by their experience.

I would like to highlight the presence of my parents, who travelled a long way to be with us here this morning. I would also thank all the other members of my family, CAF members and friends for taking time to be here and share this moment with us.

I also would like to offer a great thanks to the Beechwood Foundation for allowing us to hold this event in such a magnificent and unique setting. This multi-faith sacred space is a model for the kind of sacred space that we hope will be the future for the Canadian Armed Forces. I would like to thank all

¹ *Laudate Dominum*: Blessed are You Lord!

² Monseigneur Cyr is the bishop of the Archdiocese of Sherbrooke, the diocese of origin of BGen Guy Chapdelaine.

the people who worked to make this ceremony possible under the leadership of Padre Lisa Pacarynyk. I still maintain that music and song are a reflection of the beauty of God. And I would like to send special thanks to the staff at the Office of the Chaplain General for their key contribution to the success of this event.

I accept this new challenge with humility while knowing that I can count on an amazing, highly qualified team. I would like to thank General Vance and Lieutenant-General Whitecross for the confidence that they have placed in me; please know that you can count on my constant prayer, and unreserved support.

I am extremely grateful to Brigadier-General John Fletcher for his outstanding leadership in his thirty-five years of military career, and especially for his last two years as Chaplain General. And I send my best wishes to John and his spouse Nelson at this major turning point in their lives.

If I become Chaplain General today, it is only because of the many people who played an important role in my vocation as a military chaplain. You made me who I am through your advice and your support. I thank you all.

I spend my first years of military life in the Reserve. I have been especially touched by the many message of congratulations sent to me from Sherbrooke. My years at 52 Field Ambulance and the Fusiliers de Sherbrooke will always hold a special place in my heart. I give thanks for all of these memories.

Chaplains in the Canadian Armed Forces play a unique role owing to their closeness to military personnel and the members of their families. The Royal Canadian Chaplain Service will work with you to provide a safe environment for all. Respect for all, compassion for all, and care for all are fundamental values of our organisation. God has made such a diverse world, with diverse peoples, each with their own uniqueness. In all of our work and relationships, we are called to model God's tenderness, God's compassion and God's love in the midst of this diversity.

In the suggested readings, a common teaching reminds us of the importance of caring for the other. In the Jewish tradition, this duty begins with yourself. As the Muslim tradition reminds us, the way we treat the other must not be

based on race, colour, sexual orientation or faith but rather on our common origin: we are created by God, and we are all brothers and sisters. Human life, a gift of God the creator, has a sacred nature, and thus the violence that seeks a religious justification merits the strongest condemnation. Our society expects, of all those who claim to adore him, that they be men and women of peace, capable of living as brothers and sisters despite their ethnic, religious, cultural or ideological differences.

During my term as Chaplain General, I wish to continue the important work of spiritual resilience begun by my predecessors. The importance of health and mental well-being is underpinned by the spiritual well-being and resilience of our members and families. Our chaplaincy of well-renowned caregivers will continue to offer the pastoral care that goes beyond the call of duty and enters into the homes and hearts of our military personnel. This silent capability is a force multiplier of immeasurable significance.

This resilience that I'm talking about is not only that which belongs to our military personnel but also the spiritual resilience that belongs to the institution of the Canadian Armed Forces. There is a spirit inherent in our institution that we must preserve. The military community has a soul that requires tending. When the honour of the profession of arms is tarnished, the resulting wounds are that much deeper because they strike at the very soul of our institution and the souls of the people within it. We are determined to aspire to what is best within ourselves until we achieve personal excellence. Is that not what all religions teach?

In an increasingly secular world, we must be careful not to relegate religion only to the sphere of the private life. There is a community and public dimension to religious expression. We must remember that religions are able to contribute to the common good of communities while maintaining respect for those who do not believe. This spirit of inclusion and respect for all is strength of the Royal Canadian Chaplain Service. I would like to thank the military leadership for their openness in supporting a holistic approach to the human person, including the spiritual dimension.

To all chaplains of the Canadian Armed Forces: I again pledge to support you in your day-to-day mission. Maintain your roots in your own religious tradition that has nurtured you, and sent you to serve with us. It is only when you are faithful to who you are that you can forge genuine relationships with others. Be bridge-builders with those you accompany along the way. As I

told you this past June at our Annual Chaplain Training in Cornwall, with you I am a military chaplain, but for you I am Chaplain General. I am called to be here *for you*. I am aware of this onerous responsibility, but I know that I can count on each and every one of you.

In conclusion, we are the descendants of exceptional military chaplains who have gone before us. Together, we are stewards of a rich legacy of faithful service, showing compassion, and offering care to all. We are determined to continue to sustain the moral and spiritual force of all men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces and also the one of the members of their families. Thank you for being here today and I am counting on you to support me in your prayers.