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Providing Faith Comfort for Soldiers at War

December 17, 2010 - 11:38 AM | by: [Lauren Green](#)

The front lines are nothing like home. But for thousands of religious Americans serving their country overseas, a special MP3 player has become a friend through hard times.

The players are loaded with spiritual messages, courtesy of [The Frontline Faith Project](#).

It's like "somebody by your side to remind you that there's a higher purpose, to remind you of the hardships that others have had to endure, to make your hardships relatively small and to remind you of your core beliefs," says Lt. Loris Lapri of the U.S. Army's Second Cavalry Division.

Cheri Lomonte started the grassroots Frontline Faith effort last spring after learning that some servicemen and women can go months without having access to a military chaplain.

"The soldiers in the field ... once they get it, they want their best friend to have it too.... And the feedback we are getting is: "I get to hear Mass every day" or "I get to hear these prayers."

Lomonte, a Catholic, only got her own parish — Emmaus Church in Lakeway, Texas — involved at first. But the project grew exponentially, and now nearly 7, 000 soldiers have received the MP3 players.

They include a homily, religious music, heartfelt readings and prayers. One player included a sermon from Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio, the archbishop for the U.S. Military, saying, "The love of God and the love of neighbor is the same unique reality and cannot be separated"

The message provides comfort to soldiers at war. "Sometimes you'll operate in relatively remote areas with small groups of soldiers ... and the Army doesn't have enough chaplains to support each and every outpost with a chaplain," says Lapri, who has seen action in Afghanistan.

The Army says all of its active duty chaplain positions are filled, but it needs 300 more for the Army Reserve and National Guard. And there are only 100 Catholic priests in the armed services, which reflects a priest shortage in the general population.

The Frontline Faith Project is one of many civilian religious organizations providing spiritual help not only for soldiers but for chaplains as well.

Groups like [military ministry](#) and [adopt a chaplain](#) have the same purpose: to help provide spiritual relief to soldiers at war.

Father Tom Evans of Emmaus Church is also a colonel in the Texas State Guard, and he has served as a U.S. Army Chaplain.

He says, "When you are not seeing a person who is of your faith, or any faith for that matter, for a long, long period of time, you are in situations where you just need to hear the word, you need something to bolster your faith ...

Lauren Green

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something that is going to carry you through a tough time."

Each MP3 player costs \$24. The Frontline Faith Project also plans to produce multi-faith versions to provide spiritual support to every service member who wants or needs it.

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