

# The 76er

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## CHAPLAIN DORWART'S RETURN TO REAGAN



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## “My family consists of the Sailors aboard USS Ronald Reagan.”

- Lt. Commander Dorwart, Chaplain USN

His face shows wrinkles and lines - not those of a man who has lived a hard life, but a man whose existence is accentuated by years of learning and experience. He is wise. The crow's feet that rest atop his cheekbones give way to hazel-colored eyes - not piercing or dreamy, but inviting and kind. He is a friend. His voice is not booming or gravelly, like many men his age - it is soothing and words leave his mouth with purpose, much like those a grandfather shares while teaching his grandson one of life's many lessons. He is gentle. His left collar is adorned with a golden cross - a sign that his goal is to provide spiritual, religious, moral and personal well-being counsel to others. He can be trusted.

Meet Lt. Cmdr. William Dorwart, a compassionate member of the USS Ronald Reagan (CVN 76) team who delivers spiritual guidance and comfort to the crew. When Sailors struggle with the ups and downs of life, there is a calm and friendly silver-haired man at the ready - standing by to lend his ear, share his experience and be leaned on for support.

“An anchor sinks down into the deep and dark,” said Dorwart, Reagan's Roman Catholic chaplain. “A mysterious place. The wind blows up above and the ship gets sent in one direction. The tide goes out the other direction and moves the ship yet again, but it never gets carried away. Because deep down, there is something holding it steady.”

Chaplain Dorwart sees his place amongst the crew of America's Flagship like the relationship between a ship and its anchor - a strong, tried, and true shipmate who offers stability and steadfast support to others in both the calm and stormy seas of life.

While serving as a beacon of hope and strength to his flock, Chaplain Dorwart has earned a reputation for giving his all.

In our current world of excessive spending and living beyond one's means, Chaplain Dorwart is a stalwart example of thriving without money or superfluous possessions. Nearly all of his salary goes to the religious congregation, where it is shared across the globe, supplementing schools and churches in need.

Some Catholic priests, like Dorwart, who are a part of a religious congregation, take three vows that serve as their life compass: a vow of poverty, a vow of celibacy, and a vow of obedience.

“It's a commitment,” Chaplain Dorwart commented on his vow of poverty. “I donate the majority of my paycheck, because I don't need that much to live off of.”

While most of us are making monthly car payments and forking out plenty of cash to keep them gassed up and on the road, Dorwart hasn't

owned a car since 1980, when he was ordained to the priesthood. For the past 35 years, a bicycle has served as his transportation of choice.

Chaplain Dorwart also lives a life of celibacy, meaning he can't get married or have children. This lifestyle is not for the faint of heart, but Chaplain Dorwart chooses to faithfully fulfill this extraordinary commitment because he believes it is important.

“Celibacy can be challenging,” said Dorwart. “I work through it with the help of God.”

Chaplain Dorwart also relies on the support of the people around him, including his shipmates.

“My family is the church. So in this case, my family consists of the Sailors aboard USS Ronald Reagan,” said Dorwart.

Chaplain Dorwart didn't begin his naval career as a man of the cloth, but rather, as a man of the work bench. Shortly after graduating high school in 1967, Dorwart enlisted in the Navy as an Aviation Electronics Technician or AT.

“I tell the kids these days that I was an AT in time B.C.,” joked Dorwart. “Before computers. I couldn't do what they do today.”

Dorwart deployed to the Mediterranean Sea aboard USS Forrestal (CV 59) during its first deployment after the infamous 1967 fire that claimed 134 lives. After his Forrestal tour, Dorwart transferred to USS America (CV 66) to ride out his enlistment.

After four years of active duty, Dorwart attended the University of Notre Dame, where he earned a Bachelor of Arts degree and a Master of Divinity degree.

After his 1980 ordainment, Father Dorwart served in Oregon, Indiana, and Arizona parishes before returning to the Navy as a chaplain in 1985.

“I never planned on a career in the Navy,” said Chaplain Dorwart. “You never know how life will unfold.”

Chaplain Dorwart served in Okinawa with the First Marine Aircraft Wing, and then in 1986 reported for duty at the chapel at Naval Air Station Cubi Point, Philippines. In 1987, he helped organize the station's relief efforts following a typhoon affecting nearby islands.

From 1988 to 1991, Chaplain Dorwart served aboard USS Midway (CV 41), completing two extended deployments to the Arabian Gulf, participating in Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm.

In May 1991, Dorwart was summoned by his religious congregation to serve as a director of education and training for candidates for priesthood. Hence, he left the active duty ranks and transferred to the Naval Reserves.

PRACTICE WHAT  
YOU PREACH



STORY BY MCSN CODY HENDRIX



In 1997, then Lt. Cmdr. Dorwart resigned his commission when civilian duties prevented participation in Reserve activities.

Before returning to the Navy in 2008, Chaplain Dorwart served as the religious superior, or in layperson's terms, CEO of the Congregation of the Holy Cross. This appointment kept him busy overseeing global schools and religious institutions in places like Africa, Asia, Latin America and the United States.

Upon his Navy return, Chaplain Dorwart was re-commissioned as a lieutenant and reported to Naval Support Facility, Diego Garcia.

Following that one-year tour, he took orders to Reagan,

where he served from 2009 to 2012.

After his first tour aboard America's Flagship, Chaplain Dorwart took three-year orders to the final resting place of many American heroes - Arlington National Cemetery in Washington, D.C. During his tour, Chaplain Dorwart buried more than 1200 people, including World War II, Korean War, and Vietnam War veterans.

While circumstances for lost veterans varied, sometimes sending brothers-in-arms to their final resting place was emotionally taxing.

"The really tough ones were the SEALs that were killed in Afghanistan, or somebody from a ship that was in a motorcycle

accident," said Dorwart. "There was a burial every day."

A lieutenant commander once again, Chaplain Dorwart returns to Team Reagan with even more wisdom under his belt and as a spiritual anchor for the crew, he's here to serve Reagan Sailors by helping them keep a firm hold on their lives and stay on a true course.

"There are cultural winds that blow, telling you to go this way and that way," said Chaplain Dorwart. "Something deep down inside of you tells you to sway with the culture, but to never get carried away. It helps to know who you are, why you are, and where you're heading with your life. That's my job as a Chaplain."

Serving as a Chaplain in the military can have its fair share of trials and tribulations and Dorwart's storied career, including two stops aboard Reagan, is not an exception.

"Personally, I prefer the challenge on the Reagan," said Chaplain Dorwart. "It's very challenging working in this environment, but it's so important."

Chaplain Dorwart's mission is to help guide Sailors toward success. In his words, he'd like to help people "discover, grow, and develop."

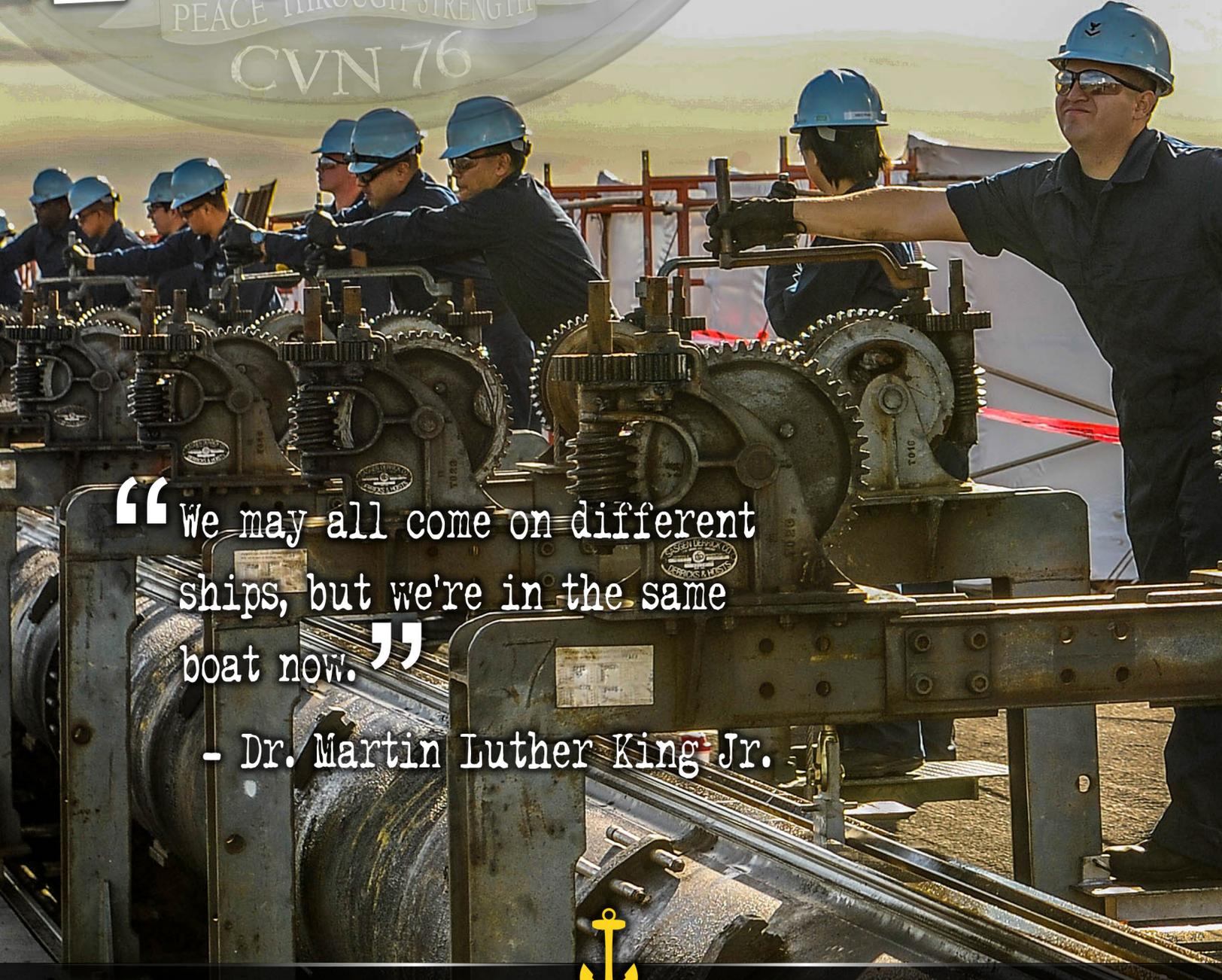
"We all should appreciate that we are a part of the Navy. Amidst that, the importance of ourselves is always the priority," said Chaplain Dorwart. "It's all about the soul work."

# WARRIOR

# E★T★H★O★S



PEACE THROUGH STRENGTH  
CVN 76



“ We may all come on different ships, but we're in the same boat now. ”

- Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.



USS RONALD REAGAN

SAILORS HELPING SAILORS. ONE TEAM. ONE FIGHT.