

Interfaith Airport Chapels of Chicago
Chicago O'Hare & Midway International Airports
www.airportchapels.org

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Summer, 2019

Dear Friend of Chicago's Airport Chapels,

A sure sign of summer is that more families are traveling through the airports! As I was walking in Terminal 2 visiting with the workers, I saw two men with puzzled expressions looking at the signs. "Hi folks. Do you need directions?" This is a greeting I use most often. They looked up and saw me wearing my standard outfit: clergy uniform and airport ID badge. They needed directions to the rental car lot.

As I finished giving the directions the dad said "Father, this is my son. Would you pray for him..." As he was saying that, I began to anticipate that he would say something about poor health, needs better grades or employment. He continued "...because he's starting a new job next week in Chicago and we're going to look at an apartment downtown." "Father, could you give me a blessing, I'm a little nervous," said the young man. They both looked excited and nervous.

As I began to lead them into prayer, I quickly remembered the excitement, apprehension, and wonder of my experience of graduating, beginning my first full-time job, and setting out on my own. They both thanked me profusely and were much more relieved and confident as they headed out of the airport. This is an example of my many, daily joys as an airport chaplain. Being in the right place at the right time and not getting in the Lord's way during an encounter.

A few weeks ago I attended a Civil Aviation Chaplains World Seminar at the Vatican. Attending were about 100 chaplains and chaplaincy team members from across the globe. Among the many talks and workshops was an audience with Pope Francis. His address was marvelously insightful and uplifting. "In airports, yours is primarily a presence of availability. You represent God's ever-present love in an environment crowded with people at work or traveling for a variety of reasons... You are present in their midst to offer, respectfully and discreetly, a chance for them to encounter the 'now' of God... so that everyone can sense God's presence. In this way airports can become 'doorways' or 'bridges' for an encounter with God but also with one another as children of the one Father."

As important as the formal talks were, some of the best ideas came as we shared our experiences with each other during meals, coffee breaks and workshops. We shared many positive and inspiring experiences of our airport ministry. We also shared challenges, for example, the prohibition against distinctive clergy garb in some airports along with the difficulty of identifying lay helpers as part of the chaplaincy.

At the O'Hare and Midway chaplaincy, we recently procured reflective vests identifying us as Airport Chaplains and Airport Chaplaincy Team members. These vests can be worn anywhere at the airport, especially on the airfield if our ministry is needed there. Some of my colleagues at the World Seminar found that to be an interesting and practical solution to the challenge of identifying chaplaincy staff.

Your financial support made the purchase of these vests possible. Your prayers are even more important! They bring a blessing upon our ministry and to the people that we serve.

Your generosity enables the O'Hare and Midway Airport Chapels to provide religious services, clergy for emergencies, pastoral care, and quiet places for prayer, meditation and reflection.

Thank you for your continued support. Know that you are always in our prayers. Please also pray for me, my colleagues -Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, and Muslim-, and all of the people we serve at Chicago's Airports.

May God always bless you and your loved ones,
Rev. Fr. Michael G. Zaniolo, STL, CAC
Administrator

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Summer Appeal Response Form

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