



# Wearing Your Uniform of Faith

from Executive Director, James Flanagan

When I served in the U.S. Army, it was a complete honor to wear our nation's uniform. It was humbling to put on that uniform each day because it served as a reminder that I was *a small part of a mission and purpose greater than myself*. When I was off duty, I quickly learned that civilians saw the uniform first – whether I was at the grocery store picking up dinner, pumping gas, or dropping off the rent check.

I soon realized that I was a better man when I had that physical representation on. When I was in my Army uniform, I was a little more:

- Patient
- Selfless
- Kind
- Generous

**Today is Ash Wednesday, the start of Lent.**

*The tradition of receiving ashes is a powerful one – our churches are usually packed! Like the Army uniform was for me, our ashes are a clear indicator to the world that we are part of something much greater than ourselves – the beautiful Roman Catholic Church.*

It's easy for us to understand that when we have our ashes, the world sees us as representing our Faith. Folks will give us a glance at work or ask about the meaning of the mark when we are picking up our dry cleaning. As a result, I bet that when you are wearing your ashes, you are a little more *patient, selfless, kind, and generous*. You realize that you aren't just representing yourself but you are representing our Faith as well.

However, when the ashes (or the uniform) are off, it's easy to forget that we are part of something greater than ourselves and our behavior can decline.

What I came to understand after a short time in the Army, was that folks knew that I was a soldier – regardless if I was wearing my uniform. I always represented the Army, and I was called daily to better live the Army values.

Likewise, while a physical marking might not always be our foreheads, the rest of the world always knows that we are Catholic through our actions. Even when we don't have that dark smudge above our eyes, our friends, family, and co-workers are looking to us as examples of our Faith. When our ashes fade, let us never forget what an honor and privilege it is to know Christ and to serve one another.

**This Lent, I encourage you to reflect on these three questions:**

1. How are you practicing patience, selflessness, kindness, and generosity?
2. How are you representing the Faith to those around you?
3. How are you working daily to strengthen your Catholic Faith?

I hope these three questions help you build your own *"uniform of faith"*, so you are reminded each day of *Who and What* you represent.

While it may be challenging to develop your faith and to lead by example, be reassured that *you are not alone*. The beauty of being a part of something greater than yourself is knowing there is a community of believers to turn to and our Heavenly Father to guide you every step of the way.

Thank you for being a part of our Catholic World Mission family. I hope that you and your loved ones have a Blessed Ash Wednesday and Lent! You are always in our prayers.

## About James Flanagan

James Flanagan is the Executive Director of Catholic World Mission and is a devout Catholic with various nonprofit leadership recognitions. He has served close to 9 years in the Army where he had the honor to lead many successful teams in countries throughout the Middle East and Asia. James later worked in Senior and Executive corporate communications roles for Fortune 250 companies with an emphasis on Corporate Social Responsibility. He holds a BBA from the University of Georgia and a JD from the Catholic University of America Columbus School of Law.



Connect with Us!

[www.CatholicWorldMission.org](http://www.CatholicWorldMission.org)

