

Father Mark Tracy is Sworn in as Catholic Chaplain for Illinois National Guard

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Father Mark Tracy sworn in as only Catholic chaplain for Illinois Army National Guard

Mt. Sterling native and current parish priest in Effingham to travel with unit

Springfield, IL – The Illinois Army National Guard officially has a Catholic chaplain to serve the men and women who serve our country. Father Mark Tracy of the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois was officially sworn in as a commissioned officer during a swearing in ceremony April 29 at Camp Lincoln in Springfield.

“I look forward in this role to serve the men and women of the military,” Father Tracy said. “These men and women do a lot for our country, and I am honored to serve them as a priest chaplain. I look forward to joining them where they are at as Christ did and accompanying them in their journey.”

Father Tracy will provide spiritual care to the men and women of the Illinois Army National Guard. The duties include administering the sacraments, counseling, and being with the men and women and accompanying them on their faith journey. He will be with his unit one weekend a month and will be active for two to four weeks every year serving domestically or internationally.

“This position is needed in the military because people need and long for the person of Jesus Christ,” Father Tracy said. “As a priest, even though I am completely unworthy, I represent the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus longs to speak through us priests. He longs to feed, touch, and heal his people through the sacraments that the priest offers. Priesthood is not the only way we encounter the person of Jesus Christ, but it is a very powerful way that Christ Jesus continues his presence among us.”

In his new role, Father Tracy will first complete the Chaplain Basic Officer Leader Course which is the chaplain initial military training. This training is 72 days broken up into three phases that he will complete this upcoming year. He will also have to travel every month to his commissioned unit in Illinois.

This new role will add a new layer to his priestly assignments as Tracy will remain the parochial vicar at St. Anthony Parish in Effingham and St. Mary Parish in Shumway.

“Two people that greatly helped me with my discernment of this unique call and vocation are Father Emil Kapaun and Father Vincent Capodanno,” Father Tracy said. “Both were military chaplains who gave up their lives while in service of their unit, country, and Christ Jesus.”

Father Tracy said the initial commitment for the Illinois National Guard will be somewhere around a six-year commitment. From there, he will work with Bishop Thomas John Paprocki to see if the bishop would like for him to continue in this role.

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****The picture below and attached can be used in your publication/website. Thanks.****

Caption: Father Mark Tracy is sworn in as a commissioned officer and Catholic chaplain for the Illinois Army National Guard by his uncle, Retired Colonel Ted Tracy (right). Father Tracy's parents, Jil and Jim, were also present for the ceremony.