

# CHANGE *of* COMMAND

A Quarterly Newsletter

Fall 2009

## CENTURION'S GUILD



**A**midst marital dreams and the holy fire of patriotism, bonds are forged and refined in ways that defy words. It goes without saying that such fervor rarely is led by humble confidence or restraint, that blind nationalism is a very dangerous thing indeed. But there are a few of us that seek to follow the narrow path of considerate patriotism and genuine piety. Over a year ago three of us came together to form a new type of kinship founded in our common vocation. One of us was active duty Navy, another was a former Air Force Cadet turned conscientious objector, and a third was an Army combat veteran.

A few months ago one of us deployed to Iraq, and we welcomed into our ranks a Marine combat veteran of 8 years and an Ohio National Guardsman. However, we represent only the beginning of a movement of men and women who desire to serve their country nonviolently, to abide by their convictions as people of faith. We remember the great faith of the Centurions who recognized

Christ's healing power at Capernaum, who approached the Baptizer in enemy territory at the River Jordan, and who bore witness to the Crucifixion and divinity of Jesus at Golgotha.

Far from abandoning our posts, we feel incredibly grateful by the opportunities offered by our nation, such as the freedoms of expression and religious practice. We remain committed to faith and service, concepts significant to both our national and spiritual identities. Centurion's Guild hopes to be the community in which other airmen, marines, sailors, and soldiers will be able to discern where and when such identities may be mutually exclusive.

In 2008 alone, we counseled over a dozen service members and provided nearly \$5,000 in grants to fellow warriors wounded by the scars of combat and spiritual fatigue. At the beginning of 2009, we began evaluating where our strengths and weaknesses lay. We have found ourselves inclined toward pastoral care and

relational support for other Centurions, including offering our own experiences and insight coupled with a consistent theology that does not compromise our religious convictions for professional obligations.

Every few months, we will be putting out a new issue of Change of Command ripe with stories, social commentary, and other resources for you and yours who might be struggling with how to reconcile their faith in God with their service to our nation.

We welcome any comments or suggestions you may have, including books or movies to review, public figures to interrogate, or articles you have written concerning issues relevant to issues central to our communal story.

Write us at [info@centruionsguild.org](mailto:info@centruionsguild.org) or call us at (215) 821-7882. Wage Peace!

# Meet a Centurion

## *U.S. Army National Guard Specialist James Tarter*

If I could be honest, I love violence. Way deep down I do love the thought of violence. It makes me feel justified. It make me feel patriotic and it makes me feel at peace with the pain in the world. My name is James Tarter. I am a Specialist in the United States Army National Guard. I am a 35F which is a military intelligence analyst. The best way to explain my job is that anytime you hear of a soldier being sent anywhere, the orders came after being requested by an analyst. The motto of an MI analyst is "Let the blood of the infantry run

through our veins, so that the blood of the infantry will not lay on our hands" There's a problem though. There's a lot of blood that has been shed trying to bring justification. But the blood needed for justification has already been shed. It's already been taken care of! Yet, we still live in a world that thinks that violence will bring peace and that the death of "enemies" will glorify God. It does not. Scripture says it doesn't. This is what I have had to come to terms with, quickly realizing that I, as a follower of Jesus, can no longer lead a life seeking

out the death of my enemy. I have applied to be a Non-Combatant CO. I have requested to be able to deploy without a weapon, in hopes to love soldiers and to love my enemy because both are worthy in the eyes of Jesus. I love my enemy, and I hate violence.....or at least I'm trying to. Not because I necessarily want to, but because I believe Jesus knows how to fix the World better than the World does. Your prayers in this endeavor would be well appreciated.

–Grace & Peace–

## Subversive Language

You may have noticed that in Centurion's Guild, we like to subvert language. It's a common practice in the Church, beginning with words such as Gospel and Evangelize, which were originally meant to announce the good news Caesar brought. If Jesus is our Lord and Savior, then it means He is our President and Prime Minister, and we must take those positions at least as seriously as we take Barak and Gordon (we don't much enjoy using last names anymore, we got so tired of it in the Armed Forces). We have found it all too easy in a nation that claims "In God we Trust" shepherded by a military Chaplaincy doing it all "For God and Country." To each we reply, Amen and Amen! When we trust in God, it may mean we fall away from the world, into the loving arms of a Commander that doesn't expect us to prove ourselves in "the gauntlet" or a gas chamber. When we do something for God, there is a chance there won't be time left for our friend Caesar...

To be a Centurion is to have experienced a profound change of command, in which our pledge of allegiance to a nation is subordinated and recognized as dependent upon our faith in God. Centurions confess a bias toward peace based upon the historic peace witnesses, and that war, being a result of sin, threatens our relationship with God and one another. Centurion's Guild exists to protect and defend prospective, current, and former service members while bearing true faith and allegiance to God. As you may have surmised, we have subverted our old oath of enlistment to empire to a renewed covenant before God and one another. We hope to become that mighty army Sister Dorothy spoke so fondly of, a force unarmed and unarming. God willing, may it be so!

## Fund Raising

Centurion's Guild is sponsored by The Simple Way, a not-for-profit corporation under section 501(c)3, for financial purposes. To donate, send checks made out to The Simple Way with "Centurion" in the memo line and mail to PO Box 14751 Philadelphia, PA 19134

## Contact

CENTURION'S GUILD  
[info@centurionsguild.org](mailto:info@centurionsguild.org)  
 (215) 821-7882

CENTURION'S GUILD:

**Logan Laituri**  
**Zach Cornelius**  
**Isaac Simerly**  
**Kyle Caldwell**  
**James Tarter**