

VFW/AUXILIARY JOINT MEMORIAL SERVICE (CONTEMPORARY)

The place of assembly should be arranged as for regular session of the order, Altar(s) draped in black. Draped VFW and Auxiliary Charters to the left and right of Altar(s). A symbolic gravesite (or optional small table draped in black) shall be used as a shrine for each symbolic tribute. Placement of participants and shrine shall closely resemble Plate A.

Titles used in the following are representative of a National Memorial Service. In applying to Departments, Districts or Posts, proper adjustments shall be made to officer titles.

This Memorial Service offers optional honors to Gold Star Families and families of our recently departed officers.

Portions of this ritual may be modified to suit the needs and desire of the sponsoring unit.

Sergeant-at-Arms: Comrades, members of the VFW Auxiliary and friends, please take your seats as our Memorial Service is about to begin.

Participants take their respective stations and the Commander-in-Chief prepares to call the session to order.

Chimes, to mark the hour, will signal the beginning of the Memorial Service.

Commander-in-Chief: *(one rap of gavel)* All rise! Sergeant-at-Arms, will you please escort the Gold Star Families and Past National Chaplains to their seats of honor.

The Sergeant-at-Arms will then escort, from the back of the hall, the Gold Star Families and Past National Chaplains to their seats of honor. Ceremonial procession utilizing "Eternal Father, Strong to Save – Navy Hymn," or other appropriate musical selection, is in order.

The VFW Auxiliary National President shall join the Commander-in-Chief at the dais, standing to the left.

Commander-in-Chief: *(To all)* Please be seated. *(Brief pause.)* There are times when mere words seem far from being adequate. This is such an occasion because we are gathered to recall persons who have made the supreme sacrifice -- and to honor their families. Thus, our deeds speak better than words.

The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States is founded upon the true comradeship of persons bound by experiences, interests and everlasting patriotism. It is the sort of comradeship that lives through succeeding generations and far back into memory because we know that neither time nor events can separate those who have joined in the common defense of our flag and country.

That is the way we feel about the persons who are absent. While they are physically gone, we remember them. In reality, they are very close to us. They are definitely a part of our thinking and actions. We feel that they have molded the future of our nation. They give us strong incentive to carry on our crusade for lasting peace and better purposes in life.

The highest tribute this organization can render those persons -- the most profound respect all of

us can demonstrate -- is to apply to our own lives the strong faith and undaunted courage which were theirs.

To the families of those comrades, we pledge the sincere friendship of this organization.

Thank you again for being here with us today.

(Brief pause.)

I now call upon VFW Auxiliary National President to prepare the Auxiliary Altar.

Auxiliary President: The VFW Auxiliary National Conductor/Conductress and Color Bearers shall prepare the Auxiliary Altar with placement of the VFW Auxiliary Memorial Altar Cloth and Bible.

Instructions for setting the Altar:

Color Bearers enter holding Memorial Altar Cloth, led by Color Bearers 3 and 4, followed by the Conductor/Conductress, who carries the open Bible. When in front of the VFW Altar, they very slowly lower the cloth onto the Auxiliary Altar. The Conductor/Conductress places the Bible on the Auxiliary Memorial Altar Cloth and steps back one (1) step.

Color Bearers 1 and 3 turn right, Color Bearers 2 and 4 turn left and proceed to the rear of the Altar, as Color Bearers 1 and 2 are in line with the Conductor/Conductress, and retire.

The VFW National Auxiliary President returns to his/her seat.

Commander-in-Chief: Sergeant-at-Arms, you will prepare the hall for the advancement of the colors followed by the Pledge of Allegiance, the National Anthem and posting of the colors. *(All rise.)*

The Sergeant-at-Arms advances down the center aisle and calls for the Captain of the VFW National Honor Guard to advance the colors. When colors start down the aisle, gives the command to audience to "Present Arms." Playing of "The National Emblem March," or other appropriate musical selection, while the colors are in motion.

Sergeant-at-Arms: Present Arms.

VFW National Honor Guard advances colors to front of Altar, salutes Commander-in-Chief, then go to Order Arms and prepare for the Invocation.

Sergeant-at-Arms: Order Arms.

Commander-in-Chief: We will now have our Invocation by VFW Auxiliary National Chaplain _____. Parade rest.

Comrades, if covered, remain covered unless otherwise directed by the presiding officer.

Auxiliary Chaplain: "Invocation"

Sergeant-at-Arms: Please join me in the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag of our country, followed by the singing of our National Anthem by VFW Auxiliary National Soloist. Present Arms.

VFW National Honor Guard goes to Present Arms for the Pledge of Allegiance and the National Anthem.

Sergeant-at-Arms: *(Leading all members in recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.)* I Pledge

Allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

National Soloist: *“National Anthem”*

Following the National Anthem, the VFW National Honor Guard will post the colors.

Sergeant-at-Arms: Order Arms!

Pause until the VFW National Honor Guard retires.

Commander-in-Chief: Please be seated. Comrades, Members of the Auxiliary and friends, we meet at this time to commemorate our comrades of the United States armed forces who have answered the last call, and their families whose service and sacrifices too often goes without the recognition it deserves.

The VFW Ritual provides that the audience shall refrain from applauding. The Sergeant-at-Arms will see that there is no disturbance during the ceremonies.

Sergeant-at-Arms: Commander-in-Chief, your order will be obeyed.

Commander-in-Chief: I request that the VFW National Chaplain preside.

VFW National Chaplain: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am at your service and shall endeavor to perform this solemn duty with reverence and in the spirit of faith, hope and charity.

VFW National Chaplain takes station of the Commander-in-Chief; the Commander-in-Chief is joined by the VFW Auxiliary National President and prepares to be escorted by the Sergeant-at-Arms.

VFW National Chaplain: We will now have the lighting of the POW/MIA candle and the Armed Forces Vigil candle by the Commander-in-Chief and the VFW Auxiliary National President.

The Commander-in-Chief and VFW Auxiliary National President are escorted to light the candles by the Sergeant-at-Arms as appropriate musical selection is played.

PRAYER

VFW National Chaplain: O God Almighty, Creator and Ruler of the Universe, some of our comrades and companions are prisoners of war and missing in action. Comfort them, we pray, in their isolation. As they are separated from their homes and loved ones, give them grace to endure their hardship. Supply their needs and protect them from want and deprivation. Strengthen and sustain them that they may face discouragement with courage and hardship with resolution. Grant that they may find patience to endure, and peace in the knowledge of Your continuing presence.

O God, we ask that You will strengthen and protect all our members of the armed forces of the United States of America. In the day of battle may they be courageous and strong, resourceful and capable, resolute and victorious. For those serving in more peaceful situations, may they serve with dignity and honor, as effective emissaries of good will for this Nation. May their devotion and loyalty to You and to their homeland inspire them in moments of challenge, and comfort them in tribulation and long separations from loved ones.

And finally, we ask they may return safely to serve You and our Country in the days and years to come. Amen.

(Pause)

VFW National Chaplain: We will now have Memorial Roll Call acknowledge recently departed Past Commanders-in-Chief and VFW Auxiliary National Presidents by prepared short remarks that include their names, term of service to the organization, and date of passing.

Remarks shall also include recognizing any family member, or their representatives, in attendance. A symbolic red rose will be presented to them by the Sergeant-at-Arms.

In lieu of the above, any unit may, if feasible, conduct a memorial roll call of all deceased Post members, or other specified officers.

VFW National Chaplain: National Officers, we will now form our Memorial Circle of Tribute.

The VFW and VFW Auxiliary line officers will assemble in a semicircle behind the VFW National Chaplain and prepare to deliver their message.

VFW National Chaplain: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, what message of comfort can you bring as we remember those who have answered the final call?

Commander-in-Chief: We can keep their memories bright and strong. We can remember their service to this country and their service to their fellow comrades and family members.

VFW National Chaplain: VFW Auxiliary National President, how can we maintain hope in the midst of our sadness and loss?

Auxiliary President: Every life has a beginning and an end. No matter the time in between, we can be thankful that we had those years together and were able to share our hearts and lives with them.

VFW National Chaplain: Comrade Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief, what message of condolence do you have for those bereaved?

Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief: Mourning is a natural part of this life, and it means we have celebrated a life well lived. The pain we feel is a reflection of the deep love and friendship we shared.

VFW National Chaplain: VFW Auxiliary National Senior Vice President, what can we do to make sure these lives are never forgotten?

Auxiliary Senior Vice President: We can continue to meet together as we are now, and to speak of them with fondness and love. We must remember and honor the memory of those we have lost.

VFW National Chaplain: Comrade Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief, what can we do in our lives today to continue the legacy of service of those gone before us?

Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief: We can continue to serve our fellow veterans, their families and our communities. We must always honor the dead by helping the living.

VFW National Chaplain: VFW Auxiliary National Junior Vice President, what hope can you offer

to those gathered here as we realize how short life can be?

Auxiliary Junior Vice President: Every day holds the opportunity to serve those around us. Our faith, friends and family can be our strength and hope as we travel life's road.

VFW National Chaplain: VFW Auxiliary National Chaplain, what can we take away from this Memorial Service so that our lives hold meaning once we depart?

Auxiliary Chaplain: Each of us must extend a hand of friendship to those around us. We must unite in our common goal of serving veterans, their families and the military community. Remembering what brings us together will help keep us united. In this way, we can best honor those comrades, sisters and brothers we have lost.

VFW National Chaplain: We are thankful for these inspiring words from each of you. Let us learn the lesson of the hour which is that one day we too will answer the final call and someone will be remembering us.

Let us live our lives so that when our time comes to depart this life, we can do it with a good conscience, in the comfort of our faith or beliefs and in perfect charity toward everyone we meet.

Let us pray.

VFW National Chaplain delivers extemporaneous prayer.

Officers, except VFW National Chaplain, take their seats.

VFW National Chaplain: Comrades, in commemorating the virtues of our departed heroes who served their country in time of need, we now offer our symbolic tributes.

I place upon our sacred shrine these red flowers, which symbolize the zeal of our departed comrades in upholding brotherhood, truth and justice.

Places flowers on shrine.

VFW National Chaplain: Comrade Past Commander-in-Chief, what tribute have you to offer?

Past Commander-in-Chief: These white flowers I place as a token of the purity of affection we have for our departed comrades.

Places flowers on shrine.

VFW National Chaplain: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, have you a tribute to offer upon this sacred shrine?

Commander-in-Chief: The blue of our national standard symbolizes truth and fidelity. Therefore, I place these blue flowers from nature's bosom in token of our sincere respect for all departed comrades.

Places flowers on shrine.

VFW National Chaplain: Members of the VFW Auxiliary, will you offer a tribute to the memory of our departed comrades?

Auxiliary President: I place upon our sacred shrine this wreath as a symbol of eternity. Its color bespeaks life everlasting. Thus do we say that the deeds of our soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines, on land, on sea and in the air, are immortalized in the hearts of a grateful people.

Places evergreen wreath on shrine.

VFW National Chaplain: VFW Auxiliary National Soloist will now perform “Sleep Soldier Boy.”

National Soloist: *May sing “Sleep Soldier Boy” or any other appropriate song.*

VFW National Chaplain: While America’s military service personnel are overseas defending liberty around the world, they leave behind those who love them most. The family members of the military keep the home fires burning. Their prayers, their care packages, their phone calls and their emails give support and encouragement for those at war.

They stand by their side in a show a love and commitment. We honor their sacrifices today.

I ask the VFW Auxiliary, what tribute do we offer to those family members gone before us?

Auxiliary President: These white flowers we bring as a token of the love that we have for our departed brothers and sisters.

Sergeant-at-Arms will escort the Commander-in-Chief and President to the Auxiliary Altar and place the white flowers around the Bible on the Altar as guest chorus, soloist or musician perform appropriate musical selection.

VFW National Chaplain: Commander-in-Chief, please approach the dais for the purpose of introducing our guest speaker.

Commander-in-Chief: *“Introduction of Guest Speaker”*

Guest Speaker: *“Memorial Address”*

Optional musical selection by chorus, soloist, musician or, if desired, group rendering of “America” or other appropriate song.

Upon conclusion of the musical selection, the VFW National Chaplain will introduce the Past VFW National Chaplain selected to deliver the Benediction, followed by the playing of “Taps.”

Comrades, if covered, remain covered unless otherwise directed by the presiding officer.

VFW National Chaplain: Please stand for the Benediction by Past VFW National Chaplain _____, followed by the playing of “Taps” by _____.

Sergeant-at-Arms: *(“Taps”) Present Arms! ... (“Taps”) Order Arms!*

Commander-in-Chief: This concludes our Memorial Service, I would like to acknowledge and thank all of the participants who contributed to making this program a success.

