

# God's Presence and the IOCC Clergy Chaplain

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has not forgotten them in their time of need, that His love surrounds them in their worst.

So keep doing that good work, and take every chance you can to serve those in need alongside IOCC. Be the presence of God for those who suffer, knowing that your small offering is enough to remind even the most downtrodden that God has not forgotten His children. Your presence is a witness to that Divine Reality!

Fr. Michael Ellis

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If you wish to contribute a reflection to the next issue of *Priest to Priest*, please email [rloumiotis@iocc.org](mailto:rloumiotis@iocc.org)



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# PRIEST *to* PRIEST

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## God's Presence and the IOCC Clergy Chaplain

*Witnessing to God's Love in the Midst of Disaster*

Fr. Michael Ellis

Many years back, my fellow IOCC Frontliner and friend Fr. Barnabas Powell shared an encounter he had on a deployment. While attending to the spiritual care of many dealing with terrible loss and even the death of loved ones, he humbly wondered if his presence was truly making a difference. At that moment, an older man approached who'd suffered loss himself. In so many words, the man said, "Father, it's good that you're here with these people. Your presence reminds them all that God has not forgotten them."

I have heard those insightful and well-chosen words repeated in my head during many deployments over the years. After Hurricane Harvey struck Houston and southeast Texas, I met people in shelters and connected with their suffering. I've been blessed to serve the elderly as they tried to make sense of Hurricane Irma's destruction in south Florida, and I've been permitted to serve those who survived devastating flooding in Iowa that washed away homes and livelihoods in an instant. But all the while, I felt unworthily privileged to stand by those same people as a witness to the fact that God had not forgotten them.



IOCC Frontliners serve in the wake of natural or man-made crises, offering emotional and spiritual care to those affected.

When we work on an IOCC jobsite, cutting out fallen trees or removing damaged cabinets from a flooded home, we have the unparalleled opportunity to stand out among many. While I know those suffering appreciate all the volunteers who serve them, that one "man in black" — his presence often seems different. While we're not necessarily more important, that presence which we represent is truly unique and truly a privilege. In the midst of debris and terrible loss, the modest presence of the priest, humbly working in the background, creates a rare opportunity to remind those in deep suffering that God is present still. It isn't helpful to tell ourselves that we're "just a man, doing menial work," because for many of those who have suffered and are watching, our mere presence reflects much more. We have an opportunity to witness to those who weep and mourn that God

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# RESPONDING TO CRISIS WITH COMPASSION

COVID-19 has changed the way people connect with one another. In this crisis, people may be feeling isolated, overwhelmed, or struggling with negative feelings. But you can help change that.

IOCC consulted with experts to develop a simple initiative called **IOCC Care Calls**. This program uses a straightforward, phase-based script that you can download. It guides you through the process of making calls to connect with people, helping them feel cared for while they explore their feelings. It's a great way to respond to this crisis with compassion—and making these calls will help you, as well.

IOCC's mission is inspired by Christ's love for all, and our work meets the highest standards of professional care. Please download the script to get started.

**Will you Care Call someone today?**

Download the full guide and script at

**[iocc.org/carecall](https://iocc.org/carecall)**



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