

A SOLDIER'S SERVICE

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LOVE OF GOD, COUNTRY AND MUSIC SUSTAIN JAY CAMIRAND AS HE PREPARES FOR WAR



Sometime in the months ahead, as most of us enjoy the changing seasons, our comfortable homes and the company of our loved ones, William “Jay” Camirand Jr. will board a military transport plane with his National Guard unit for deployment to Iraq. Camirand, who left his position as music director for Rivier’s Campus Ministry in May to begin preparation for his assignment, has been told to expect an extended tour of duty in the war zone. It will be his first time in the Middle East, but not his first in a frightening and dangerous place—last year, he volunteered to join other Guard members in New Orleans immediately after Hurricane Katrina.

Set up in a school approximately 25 miles from the downtown Superdome, Camirand and his fellow soldiers waited four days for electricity and another three for water. The unit assisted local police and helped maintain calm in the devastated areas. “We were seen, and rightly so, as a deterrent to vandalism,” he says. “As people were allowed officially back into the area, we were greeted very warmly. It wasn’t uncommon to have a meal paid for by grateful citizens or business owners.” Camirand also spent a week at the New Orleans Children’s Hospital, then at Loyola University, which he describes as “a beautiful Catholic college with a huge statue of St. Ignatius in the center of it all.” But this relatively safe and pleasant setting was a stark contrast to other areas of the city not far away.

A sergeant in the Guard, Camirand specializes as a lightwheel vehicle mechanic but is crosstraining as a military police officer for the Iraq mission. He joined the Guard in February 2005, 17 years after his first Army experience, a four-year stint that began in 1985. He is driven in all aspects of his life by a

deep devotion to his Catholic faith. "I'm pretty confident about my whole deployment. The good Lord has shown, through many and various situations, that I am in good hands," he says, even acknowledging that his beliefs can sometimes present a conflict of interest with his military service. "How do I love my enemies and protect my country at the same time?" he asks. But he answers the question by citing the Catechism's explanation of the Fifth Commandment: "Those who are sworn to serve their country in the Armed Forces are the servants of security and freedom of nations. If they carry out their duty honorably, they truly contribute to the common good of the nation and the maintenance of peace."

Camirand's military supervisors have told him he will have access to the Internet and the ability to communicate with his family—good news, certainly, for wife Jennifer and their children, Madison Paige, 8; Ryan Matthew, 7; and Alexandra Brooke, 4 1/2. "We are very close," he says of his family, "and I know it will truly be a trial of our faith."

Rivier will certainly be in his thoughts as he serves his country. "I have enjoyed my time tremendously on Sundays with the students," he says. "It's been a very good musical ministry experience. I will miss it and cherish the memories." The music ministry that brought him to Rivier is a key component of his faith. "If I could do anything without financial constraint, I'd seek out more opportunities to serve the Lord through music," he says. "In jails and prisons, through radio and multimedia presentations, together with my family and friends."

Jay Camirand will always be a member of the Rivier family, wherever the future takes him. And as he prepares for what will be the most difficult mission of his life, he sends a message to the College: "I am grateful to my friends in campus ministry and all the students I have had the privilege of knowing. I solicit your prayers and good will for my trip as I remember the Rivier community in mine." ■

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