

Rev. Anthony Bruno
E. R. Cass Award Acceptance
August 12, 2008

Dear Friends and Correctional Colleagues

May I begin my remarks by with the merciful gesture expected of a Chaplain. I promise I will spare you the agony of a long speech. One reason is that actually I am still speechless, six months after learning of my selection for the E. R. Cass Award, the American Correctional Association's (ACA) most prestigious award.

I am deeply grateful to ACA for this wonderful honor. I have compared this award to the Oscar. The E. R. Cass Award is the Oscar in the Field of Corrections. To simply have been nominated from more than 7,000 dedicated Connecticut Department of Correction Employees is a wonderful honor. But then to have been actually selected from applications submitted from throughout the United States and Canada has been an unparalleled thrill.

I must first thank Commissioner Theresa C. Lantz of the Connecticut Department of Correction for nominating me and for the supportive environment that she has provided not only for me but also for all who work in our agency. I am sorry that she is unable to be present this evening. However, Mary M. Marcial, the Director of Programs and Treatment for the Connecticut Department of Correction—and my immediate boss—is present and I am honored that she is here to represent Commissioner Lantz and the entire Connecticut DOC.

In accepting this award, I do so as a representative of all the employees of the CT DOC. I also receive it as a representative of all the members of the American Correctional Chaplains Association—more than 600 in number--those here present as well as those who are absent.

Please permit me to offer a brief analogy regarding the unique and challenging work environment of the correctional Chaplain. Analogies are never perfect—it is said they always “limp”—but they do get a point across.

If you think about it, incarceration is similar to Medical Quarantine. In medical quarantine—you may recall the recent international incident of a person being diagnosed and quarantined with a virulent and rare strain of tuberculosis—a patient is removed from society for two reasons: (1) to protect society from further danger and (2) to benefit the person quarantined.

All persons working in corrections are there to both (1) protect society from further danger and, in one way or another, (2) benefit the inmate, the “quarantined party”.

This award proclaims in a singular way the high value that the ACA has always placed on religion and spirituality in treating the inmate quarantined from society. The religious services unit is regarded as an essential element in the treatment process. And successful treatment results in individual healing for the inmate and a safer community upon his/her release, which is why we are all properly called “correctional professionals.” The ACCA is committed to maintaining its close relationship with the ACA as we work together to achieve our common goals.

I shall treasure this award. May I always be worthy of this honor. Once again, thank you.