

Through the AI Looking Glass

By Adam Tietje

A few things are amiss with the cover. The priest in the foreground wears a collar in uniform as well as an over-the-top amount of beads. The patches are unrecognizable. The cover image was generated using OpenAI's artificial intelligence image generator, DALL·E. My prompt: "Give me an image of a military chaplain providing pastoral care to soldiers." Look at the image again. What do you see now? I see a white, Christian man ministering to other white men, as nearly I can tell. As a white, Christian man myself this did not initially stand out to me. Only after viewing dozens of DALL·E-generated images of military chaplains did I begin to see the pattern. They were all white, Christian men. I had to expand my prompts to DALL·E from "military chaplain" to "Black woman military chaplain" or "Muslim military chaplain" to generate images of women chaplains or chaplains of other religious traditions or both. For DALL·E, at least for now, an image of a military chaplain is an image of white, Christian man.

I raise this issue not as a criticism of DALL·E per se. DALL·E was trained on publicly available images from the internet. What I take away from the exercise is that looking at images from DALL·E can be like looking at a mirror in harsh light. We may not like what we see, but there is no denying what we see. Our cover, then, serves as a discomfiting image for us in the U.S. Army Chaplain Corps. It is not how we might choose to see ourselves, but it is how we are seen, even as we continue to recruit and retain incredible chaplains who represent the rich diversity of the United States.

In our last issue, our Forum examined the nascent challenges of artificial intelligence (AI) for the Chaplain Corps. In this issue, our Forum examines important questions around soldiering and gender. Our cover, then, serves as a link between these two important conversations. Although in different ways, the wider cultural conversations around AI and gender have been fast paced and have upended long held assumptions about what could or should be possible. Both conversations have broad implications for the future of warfighting and religious support

and demand our attention. Chaplain (Major) Mel O'Malley, Sergeant Major Daniel Roberts, and theologian Gene Rogers each bring a wealth of wisdom and experience to the discussion.

Future issues will develop a more sustained focus around a theme while still holding space for discussion outside of that theme. The November 2024 issue will focus on "Military Chaplains and the Civil-Military Divide," for example. For May, we have a set of articles that speaks to the breadth of the issues facing the Chaplain Corps. Theological ethicist Daniel Bell offers a virtue ethics approach to situating chaplains within the just war tradition that he first presented at our "Care of Souls and the Ethics of War" conference at Duke University in November 2023. Chaplain (Major) Patrick Stefan argues that we need a legal definition of religion. Master Sergeant Eric Tysinger argues for a need to re-align Army garrison religious support on joint bases under the Army senior commander. In our new Best Practices section, Chaplain (Major) Luke Heibel analyzes a chaplain-led program for its possibilities for ministry to Charles Taylor's "buffered selves," while Chaplain (Major) Brandon Denning and Chaplain (Major) Daniel Werho ask us to consider how Multi-Domain Operations may require new approaches to preaching. Chaplain (Major) Pete Robinson and Chaplain (Captain) Marcus Marroquin outline an intentional approach for the first ninety days of ministry at a new unit.

The *Journal*, like the Chaplain Corps and the Army, is in the midst of transformation. The Harding Project has provided new energy to ongoing priorities around shifting our publication from a print journal that gets posted online to an online journal that is integrated within civilian academic databases and conforms to the highest standards of civilian academic publishing. I cannot get there on my own and so I want to acknowledge the ongoing efforts of the USA-IRL staff, especially Mitch Ashmore, the Knowledge Management Officer, Gino Carr, the S6, Chuck Heard, the Deputy Director of Training for the Religious Leadership Academy, and Mike Craddock, Religious Support Simulations Center Chief.