# The wealth of friendship

**By Chaplain Corey Thornton**

I have recently come in contact with a significant number of Sailors who are struggling with loneliness. Their loneliness is accompanied by depression, lack of motivation and a fixation on family or friends from which they are geographically separated. Many aspects of their loneliness reminded me of a sea story of my own.

While serving on board a Ticonderoga-class cruiser in my last duty station, I remember struggling with loneliness while out at sea. I did not suspect at first that it was loneliness. Being older than many of the crew and a chaplain, I figured that it had to be an issue that sounded more profound. I had the same or similar struggles with depression, motivation and missing family members that I see in the Sailors mentioned above.

While searching for an explanation to these struggles, an answer suggested itself from an unexpected event. While out to sea I was assigned to accompany a young Sailor to his home of origin to help him with some urgent family responsibilities. As it turned out, his home was near to the town that I had gone to college.

Although it had been a number of years since I attended college, many of my dearest friends still lived there. Once the Sailor had fulfilled his responsibilities, I had the opportunity to visit some of my friends. To my amazement, much of the issues that I was struggling with on the ship vanished when I was with them. None of them are counselors or doctors, and we did not do anything extraordinary. I came to realize that my problem was not profound, it was simple: I was lonely.

Although I served with 370 Sailors in close quarters, my time spent on board the ship felt as if I was alone. It took contact with friends who knew me personally for me to feel identified with and cared for. I imagine that some of this situation was unique to being the one chaplain in the command and so not directly identifiable to the other crew members, but I can't help but see many similarities between my condition and many of those around me.

If close and genuine friendship met my interpersonal needs, why do we not have this type of exchange throughout the Navy? I can see for many that they actually do have these types of friendships with their fellow shipmates, but there are a significant number who do not. There are likely many reasons for this and I would like to suggest a few here. One is that we all transfer so often.

A colleague of mine made the observation that Sailors on their first tour seemed to him more willing to engage in close friendships than in subsequent tours. His reasoning was that they realized that there was no use in getting too close to anyone because you would be separated from them when you or they transferred.

Close friendships often take years to mature. When everyone you serve with is in and out of your life every six months to two years, it is easy to see why relationships may never get beyond the superficial. This limited expectation leads to another hindrance to close friendships; not seeing past the uniform.

Although the Navy uniforms serve many vital functions, they do not help us to see the person behind the uniform. It never ceases to amaze me, the amount of talent that our Sailors have. There were multiple opportunities with our crew to see this talent, such as national heritage celebrations, religious services and talent competitions.

Of our 370 Sailors, we had a hula dancer, multiple classically trained singers and musicians, writers, history buffs, and athletes, just to name a few. I'm afraid that too often these talented people get hidden behind their uniforms and their rate and rank. It's too easy to focus only on the seemingly mission-essential tasks that a Sailor can perform at the expense of seeing what makes them unique and truly human. One important result of this is to have many who feel disconnected from one another and alone. And loneliness is a poverty that we should not be content to live with or around.

In the book "*In the Heart of the World*," Mother Teresa said this about the poor of the world and loneliness:

"Abandonment is an awful poverty. There are poor people everywhere, but the deepest poverty is not being loved. The poor we seek may live near us or far away. They can be materially or spiritually poor. They may be hungry for bread or hungry for friendship. They may need clothing, or they may need the sense of wealth that God's love for them represents. They may need the shelter of a house made of bricks and cement or the shelter of having a place in our hearts."

Our connection with other people is vital to health, wealth and even survival. A life that is lived unintentionally alone is an empty shell of what God intended. To offer friendship to another comes at a cost. It requires time, focus and energy. To be a friend is to be willing to be spent on another, to invest understanding and empathy, love and care.

What we offer when we offer friendship is a source of wealth that cannot be replaced with money or stuff. You are a treasure meant to be invested through friendship with others. If you are a Sailor or work amongst them, you are surrounded by others who sorely need your friendship.

# SECNAV stresses alternative energy at strategy forum

**Secretary of the Navy the Honorable Ray Mabus delivers a keynote speech at the U.S. Naval War College 62nd annual Current Strategy Forum June 11. Mabus discussed how the Navy and Marine Corps have made strides towards seeking alternative energy sources, but must continue to push ahead to be less reliant on fossil fuels.**

**U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Kevin S. O'Brien**

**From Naval War College Public Affairs**

NEWPORT, R.I. - Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus spoke on the importance of pursuing alternative energy during a keynote speech at the U.S. Naval War College's 62nd annual Current Strategy Forum (CSF) in Newport, R.I., June 8.

Mabus discussed how the Navy and Marine Corps have made strides towards seeking alternative energy sources, but must continue to push ahead to be less reliant on fossil fuels. This challenge, he said, is a strategic issue that is important to U.S. national security.

"We use too much fossil fuel," he said. "We have to change the way we use, produce, get energy. We have to do it strategically, we have to do it tactically."

Every dollar rise in the price of a barrel of oil costs the Navy and Marine Corps $31 million, he said, noting that oil-price increases in fiscal year 2011 will result in a $562 million addition to the operating budget of both services - more than the cost of a littoral combat ship.

"We don't have that money to spare. We certainly don't have it to spare in this fiscal environment," he said.

The reliance on fossil fuels affects the Navy and Marine Corps at the tactical level as well. He used the complex process to transport fuel to Afghanistan as a costly example, from monetary costs to manpower resources, to lives lost in attacks while providing security.

To combat this issue, the secretary issued five energy goals, one of which is to ensure at least half of all energy used by the Navy and Marine Corps will come from non-fossil fuels no later than 2020. This type of challenge, he said, is not new to services that transitioned from sails to coal-fired steam in the 19th century, switched to oil 50 years later, and then added nuclear power to the fleet in the 1950s.

"I think we're right on the edge of another energy revolution," Mabus said, pointing out how quickly such change happens. He compared the potential for energy developments with the recent emergence of iPads, smart phones and other devices transforming the way we communicate.

"We have the opportunity to help create the new energy future and the new energy economy for this country," said Mabus.

In the energy arena, progress has been made, including completion of solar-power projects, energy-efficient buildings, and smart meters across the Department of the Navy.

Mabus described how private industry will play a key role in future developments in partnership with the Department of the Navy. Specific parameters, such as ensuring that energy alternatives are compatible with already existing platforms and equipment, and that any developments do not compete with food production, will need to be considered.

"Because while the military can lead, it's going to have to be industry that expands the market," he said.

Attended by the Naval War College community and participants from throughout the country, this year's two-day Current Strategy Forum explored the theme of "Energy and the U.S. National Security: Vulnerability and Opportunity."

The event featured speakers from military, academia and industry, discussing the critical role of energy in international security, the current and future impact of increasing global demands on natural resources, and the related vulnerabilities and opportunities for the nation and the maritime services in a more energy constrained environment.

The Current Strategy Forum is hosted annually by the Secretary of the Navy.