

# VFW RITUAL



**VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS.**

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS  
OF THE UNITED STATES

August 2025



**Americanism** is an unfailing love of country; loyalty to its institutions and ideals; eagerness to defend it against all enemies; undivided allegiance to the flag; and a desire to secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and posterity.



Men and women returning from all quarters of the globe stand before our altars of comradeship, pledging loyalty to the nation and to one another.

Through the generations we give life to our impressive ritual, for it solemnly binds young and old who have fought for America on land, on sea and in the air.

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## FOREWORD

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The ceremonies described in our Ritual symbolize the high ideals for which we strive. All ceremonies should be presented expressively and accurately so that recruits and members alike are impressed by the full meaning of every action.

The altar with its flag and Bible, the prayers, pledges and the official stations comprise the inner sanctum of our order. They express the distinctive character of the world's oldest overseas war veterans' organization.

Every comrade interpreting the ritual should memorize thoroughly the portrayal of their part. A smooth performance is necessary to make the proper impression on the audience.

Veterans coming to us from military forces of all wars appreciate painstaking attention to details. Our first influence upon recruits and new members will be through presentation of the VFW ritual. Every participant is urged to give their best.

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## OPEN MEETINGS

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### **OPEN MEETINGS**

When open meetings are to be held these instructions should be followed:

### **OPENING CEREMONIES**

Full ritualistic work is permissible in meetings open to the public. All persons present shall salute the colors at proper times.

### **CLOSING CEREMONIES**

Colors are presented. All rise and salute the colors. Colors are retired. Commander states: "This meeting is closed."

### **OBLIGATION OF RECRUITS**

Recruits may be obligated publicly. For instructions see page 21, "Initiation Ceremony, Brief Form," and page 28, "Ceremonial Initiation."

### **INSTITUTION OF NEW POSTS**

This ceremony may be used in openings as prescribed including obligation of candidates and installation of officers.

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## GENERAL RULES

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This Ritual may not be changed except by the *National Council of Administration or the National Convention*.

1. Officers are personally responsible for their Rituals. They shall permit only properly authorized persons to read the Ritual.
2. While the Post is in session, no member will pass between the altar and the Commander's station, except as prescribed by the Ritual.
3. All officers should memorize their parts and practice with co-workers in order to render all ritual work correctly and impressively. See the Foreword.
4. When addressing the Commander all officers salute in a military manner. The Commander will return similar salutes. All officers exchange salutes when addressing each other.
5. One rap of the gavel calls attention or seats the body when standing. Two raps of the gavel call everyone to standing attention.
6. At National and Department conventions the "Star Spangled Banner" should be played or sung at the Opening Session, immediately after the colors are placed.
7. All Posts should hold a public memorial service for their departed comrades, at least once a year. This may be held as a special ceremony or in conjunction with a public meeting.
8. "Sleep, Soldier Boy," by Dorothy Alexander, Auxiliary No. 409, or any other appropriate song may be used at all VFW memorial services.
9. All VFW military formations and procedures shall conform with the current Infantry Drill Regulations, United States Army.
10. The military salute shall be given in all ceremonials and meetings when a member wishes to address the Commander or presiding officer. The military salute shall also be used in the ceremonial work, as set forth in this Ritual.

11. In compliance with directives approved by the Veterans of Foreign Wars 59th National Convention and the VFW National Council of Administration "the Flag of the United States, of appropriate size and attached to a standard, shall be placed upright upon the VFW altar to the left of a Bible—(to the left of the Bible as viewed by one standing before the altar and facing the Commander's station). The POW/MIA flag may be placed to the right of the American Flag. Both the flags and Bible shall be upon a regulation VFW altar cloth."
12. (a) All members who are able will stand during the offering of the prayers; (b) members will follow the action of the Chaplain or presiding officer relative to removal of caps during prayers; if uncovering, the hat shall be placed on the extended closed fingers of the right hand in such a way that the Cross of Malta is exposed and held over the heart; (c) official caps will not be worn during luncheons, banquets or other meals; (d) Official caps will be the only head covering allowed to be worn at regular meetings of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

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## COMMEMORATIVE TRIBUTES

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Posts should arrange special ceremonies and all Commanders shall alert comrades to their obligations for appropriate commemoration of the following outstanding action dates in U.S. history:

### THE DATES

January 27 - Signing of the Vietnam Peace Accord in 1973.  
February 15 - Sinking of U.S.S. Maine, 1898.  
February 28 - Liberation of Kuwait—Operation Desert Storm 1991.  
March 24 - Start of Kosovo Campaign 1999.  
March 29 - *National Vietnam War Veterans Day*.  
March 31 - End of Operation Restore Hope—Somalia 1995.  
May 1 - Loyalty Day, annually.  
May 8 - VE Day: German unconditional surrender signed, 1945.  
May 30 - Memorial Day.  
June 6 - D Day: Allied invasion of Europe, 1944.  
June 14 - Flag Day.  
July 4 - Independence Day.  
July 27 - Signing of the Korean Armistice in 1953.  
August 31 - End of Operation Iraqi Freedom 2010.



September 2 - VJ Day: Japan surrendered, 1945, ending World War II fighting.  
September 11 - Patriot Day.  
September, 3<sup>rd</sup> Friday - POW/MIA Recognition Day.  
October 7 - Start of Operation Enduring Freedom - Afghanistan 2001.  
October 18 - Recognition of Women in Military Service.  
October 23 – Beirut Bombing.  
November 11 - Signing World War I Armistice, 1918. Veterans Day.  
December 7 - Pearl Harbor Day, since 1941.

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## **SPECIAL PRAYERS**

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### **PRAYER OF THANKS**

Our Heavenly Father, we come to You in this moment because we believe that You are our God and we are Your people, and You are the creator and sustainer of life.

We acknowledge that every good and perfect gift comes from above and that all that we have comes from Your divine beneficent hand.

We thank You for this food and ask for Your blessing upon us as we partake. Teach us to be always mindful of Your loving kindness and tender mercies. Amen.

### **BENEDICTION**

Our Heavenly Father, we ask that You will dismiss us with Your blessing, and grant that we may continually experience the calmness and serenity of heart and soul which comes from You. Make us useful servants in all things. Amen.

### **VETERANS DAY PRAYER**

Almighty God, Father of us all! We, Your servants, turn to You for continuance of Your blessings upon us. You who have spared us veterans from the grasp of our enemies, grant us the full understanding of Your precious comfort.

We thank You for the privileges of life and the blessings we enjoy through Your graciousness in our country, the land in which we are given the freedom of speech, religion and the pursuit of happiness.

Assist us to know You better and the wisdom to acknowledge You as the God of the universe and our ideal.

In Your mercy, may we the living find our peace. Grant us from above, this day, the challenge of high endeavor, the beauty of an humble spirit, the strong courage and will, without exertion, to continue to glorify You; to praise You, and to love You to the end of time. Amen.

### **PEARL HARBOR DAY MEMORIAL PRAYER**

Heavenly Father, we are gathered here to commemorate those among Your servants who gave their lives at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. Because of their dedication to duty we still enjoy the freedoms we inherited from our forefathers. Because they served well, we are proud to call them our own. We ask that, following in their footsteps, we may continue in Your service until Your summons comes. Then, in the knowledge that we have striven to observe Your councils and precepts, may be worthy to be united with them and with You forever. Amen.

### **PRAYER FOR GOLD STAR PARENTS**

O Lord, we thank You for the many blessings You have bestowed upon us and on our Country. We ask You to bless and to comfort our Gold Star Parents who are here today. Give them the strength to do their daily tasks and the courage to meet the problems of life. Grant that their example may be our inspiration. Amen.

### **PRAYER ATTRIBUTED TO GEORGE WASHINGTON**

Almighty God, we make our earnest prayer that Thou wilt keep the United States in Thy holy protection; that Thou wilt incline the hearts of the citizens to cultivate a spirit of obedience to government, and entertain a brotherly affection and love for one another and for their fellow citizens of the United States at large; and, finally, that Thou wilt most graciously be pleased to dispose us all to do justice, to love mercy, and to demean ourselves with that charity, humility, and pacific temper of mind which were the characteristics of the Divine Author of our blessed religion,

and without a humble imitation of whose example in these things we can never hope to be a happy Nation.

Grant our supplication, we beseech Thee, O Lord!

### **PRAYER OF SAINT FRANCIS**

Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; and where there is sadness, joy.

Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.

### **A PRAYER FOR THE SICK**

Lord, Almighty God, we pray Your healing grace in behalf of (Name of Person). May (Name) know the blessing of good health in this hour and throughout life. Bless all who minister to (Name) in body, mind and spirit and grant that we may always give praise to You, our heavenly Father. Amen.

### **PRAYER AT A FUNERAL WITHOUT FORMAL RITUAL**

Eternal Father, giver and sustainer of life, we come before You in the joy of our Faith and in thanksgiving for the life of (Name of Deceased). We commend the soul of our departed Comrade (Auxiliary Member) to You. Lord, we ask You to help us honor the memory of (Name) by service to the living. Amen.

### **PRAYER FOR THE OPENING OF AN INFORMAL MEETING**

Almighty God, we thank You for bringing us together this day. Inspire us to worthy deeds and sound decisions and direct us toward the attainment of our goal. We pray that You would bless and protect all of our people. Guide us on the path to unity and harmony that we may serve You and Your people in keeping with Your holy will. Amen.

### **PRAYER AT THE CLOSING OF AN INFORMAL MEETING**

Glory be to You our Lord and our God as we behold the blessings You have given us as citizens of these United States of America. We thank You Lord, for this blessed and bountiful Land. Help us to renew our loyalty to this great Country and enable us to rededicate ourselves in Faith to Your service. We pray Lord, in Your holy name. Amen.

### **PRAYER FOR DECEASED COMRADES AND/OR MEMBERS OF THE AUXILIARY**

Heavenly Father, we are gathered here to commemorate those among Your servants who have been called to Your bosom in the land of light. We pray that Your mercy and justice have made right their human failings and faults. We pray that whatever justice was denied them in this vale of tears has been granted them a hundredfold. We pray that whatever comforts they were denied in this life, whatever evil they endured, may now redound to their everlasting happiness.

We are thankful for their companionship and association in this life. By their efforts we are assured security and strength. Because they served well, we are proud to call them our own.

We ask that, following in their footsteps, we may continue in Your service until Your summons comes. Then, in the knowledge that we have striven to observe Your truths and precepts, may we be judged worthy to be united with them and with You forever in heaven. Amen.

### **A PRAYER FOR PEACE IN THE WORLD**

O God, source of all holy desires, right counsels and just works, grant us that peace which the world cannot give, so that we may be obedient to Your commands and that under Your protection we may enjoy peace in our days and freedom from fear of our enemies. We ask this in Your great and holy Name. Amen.

### **A PRAYER AT THE CONCLUSION OF A MEMORIAL SERVICE**

Almighty God, our gratitude for Your generosity grows with each passing day. We acknowledge this day's special blessings. We have honored those who now enjoy Your eternal embrace. We ask Your blessing on all here present. Especially do we seek Your consolation for those recently bereaved. May Your grace be with them and with us now and forever. And, if it be Your will, may we all be favored to gather again in these circumstances and in this company before another year has passed. Amen.

### **VETERANS PRAYER OF THANKS**

Almighty God, Father of us all! We, Your servants, turn to You for Your continuing blessings upon us. You, who spared us, combat veterans, from the grasp of our enemies, grant us the full understandings of Your precious comfort.

We thank You for the privileges of life and the blessings we enjoy through Your graciousness to our country, the land in which we are given freedom of speech, religion and the pursuit of happiness. Continue Your presence with us always and may we continue to serve you faithfully. Amen.