



BLESSING OF THE FLEETS 2016 - YEAR OF THE MARINE CORPS

The Navy Memorial celebrated its annual "Blessing of the Fleets" ceremony on Saturday April 16th in Washington, D.C. Each year the blessing—an official event of the District's Cherry Blossom Festival—pays homage to the Navy's sea-bound duties and is intended to safeguard naval crews and ships from the danger of the seas. This ceremony, which originated centuries ago in European fishing communities, has been passed down through generations of sailors and seafaring merchants and honors our nation's reliance on the seas with a traditional blessing at the water's edge.

Each year, the Blessing of the Fleets ceremony honors a particular branch of service or unit. For 2016, the Navy Memorial is honoring the "Year of the Marine Corps"—a special tribute to the Marine Corps and Marine Corps Reserves. A highlight of the "Year of the Marine Corps" will be an exhibit at the Navy Memorial showcasing rare Marine Corps artifacts and memorabilia. Exhibit planners took great time and effort to ensure the exhibit, on display through March 2017, showcased the rich heritage of the U.S. Marine Corps. Marine Corps themed presentations, lectures, book events, and panel discussions are planned throughout the year.

In keeping with the spirit of The Year of the Marine Corps, the service was represented at the blessing by the chaplain of the Marine Corps, Rear Admiral Brent W. Scott, delivering the Blessing of the Fleets and LtGen Berger, Commanding General, I Marine Expeditionary Force, who was the key note speaker.

One of the most significant events of the ceremony is the Charging of the Fountain. This event culminates the Blessing when a joint-ceremonial guard "cross the "Granite Sea" of the Memorial Plaza and pour water into the surrounding fountains, thereby "charging" them to life—a recognition that Spring has arrived.

The Marine Corps played a significant role in this year's charging ceremony by collecting samples of water from Marine Corps Installations around the globe. Water samples came from as far away as Okinawa, Japan from Marine Corps Installations Pacific and III MEF Headquarters Group and included representation from both the East China Sea and from the Western Pacific Ocean. Marine Corps Installations not only on the coastal oceans, such as II MEF, Camp Lejeune's Onslow Beach (Atlantic Ocean) and I MEF, Camp Pendleton (Pacific Ocean) participated in this tradition but also those installations on rivers and ponds. Samples were received from USMC Support Facility Blount Island (St. Johns River) in Florida and USMC Logistics Base Albany, GA (Covella Pond). This varied representation of water from Marine Corps Installations, joined with the Navy's diverse samples, gave great symbolism to the Charging of the Fountains and reinforced the comments of LtGen Berger.

In his remarks, LtGen Berger stressed that "Every year is the Year of the Navy and Marine Corps... We [The Marines] cannot accomplish our mission without the Navy; and the Navy cannot accomplish its mission without the Marine Corps."

Attendees and participants were treated to a performances by the "The President's Own" United States Marine Band. Following the ceremony, Navy Bean Soup prepared by the Navy White House Mess was available to all attendees proceeded by an afternoon of Maritime Music performances by Marine Band's



Free Country Ensemble (the Marine Band's contemporary ensemble) and Washington Revels Maritime Voices.

The Navy Memorial hosts its annual Blessing of the Fleets ceremony at the Washington Navy Memorial and the event is free and open to the public.