

SEMPER FIDELIS, ALWAYS FAITHFUL

“A faithful man shall abound with blessings....” Proverbs 28:20a

The United States Marine Corps adopted the motto ‘Semper Fidelis’ in 1883, on the initiative of Colonel Charles McCawley, the 8th Commandant of the Marine Corps. There were three mottos prior to ‘Semper Fidelis’ including ‘Fortitudine’ (with courage) antedating the War of 1812, ‘Per Mare, Per Terram’ (by sea, by land; presumably inherited from the British Royal Marines, who have that as a motto), and up until 1843, there was also the Marines’ Hymn motto ‘To the Shores of Tripoli’. ‘Semper Fidelis’ signifies the dedication and loyalty that individual Marines have for Corps and Country, even after leaving service. Marines frequently shorten the motto to Semper Fi. ‘Semper Fidelis’ is also the title of the official march of the United States Marine Corps, composed by John Philip Sousa in 1889. On the United States Marine Corps Seal, the symbols of the Eagle, Globe, and Anchor hold a ribbon emblazoned ‘Semper Fidelis’. (historic facts compiled from Wikipedia and edited for content)

Perhaps you are unaware of the fact that our motto is not unique to the Marine Corps. It is also in use as a motto for towns, families, schools, and other military units throughout the world. The motto is believed to have originated from a phrase used by the senators of ancient Rome. The earliest definitively recorded use of ‘Semper Fidelis’ is as the motto of the French town of Abbeville since 1369. It has also been used by other towns, and is recorded as the motto of various European families since the 16th century, and possibly since the 13th century or earlier. Records show many families in England, France and Ireland used this motto.

In addition to Abbeville, France, the following cities have also used this motto: Lviv, Poland from 1936-1939; the City of Exeter, in Devon England, since at least 1660; St. Malo, Brittany, France since the 17th century; Calvi, Corsica for 500 years; and White Plains, New York.

The south-western English town of Exeter used this motto since no later than 1660, inspiring its use by several south-western English military units. **Other military units that used this slogan include the following:** Duke of Beaufort’s Regiment of Foot from 1685; First Exeter and South Devon Rifle Volunteer Corps from 1852; Devonshire and Dorset Regiment since 1958; The Irish Brigade of France 1690 – 1792; French 47th Infantry Regiment; Cadet Corps of the Dutch Royal Military Academy since 1828; 11th Infantry Regiment, United States Army since 1861; The West Nova Scotia Regiment since 1936; Canadian Forces Base Valcartier since 1914; Swiss Grenadiers since 1943; Republic of China Marine Corps since 1947, their motto is not in Latin and literally means ‘loyalty forever’ and is specifically modelled on the United States Marine Corps motto. Other units include The Romanian Protection and Guard Service since 1990; and The Hungarian Government Guard since 1998.

‘Semper Fidelis’ serves as the motto of a number of schools around the world, but we will only call attention to a few: Buffalo Seminary, Buffalo, New York; Killarney Secondary School, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada; **St. Anne’s Catholic Girls’ School**, Southampton, England; **Gordon’s School, Surrey, England since 1885; Kapiti College, Raumati**, New Zealand; Bloemhof Girls High, Stellenbosch, South Africa; Wynnum State High School, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia; and The University College of Appingedam, Groningen, The Netherlands.

Marines are ‘always faithful’ and we can trust our lives to our brothers without hesitation. We have witnessed this trust in every firefight, on every battle field of the world, through every war, and during moments of peace. The **definition of ‘faith’ is to have complete ‘trust’ in someone.** The Bible declares the Lord to be ‘always faithful’. His motto is confirmed by the Scriptures and His motto antecedes all others. God is true. His Word of Promise is sure. We may put our complete trust in Him. In all His relations with His people God is faithful. He may be safely relied upon. There is not a chance that He will ever break His Word. However, it is one thing to accept His faithfulness as a divine truth, but it is quite another to act upon it. The Bible also says, “...faith (trusting Him) is counted for **righteousness.**” This is good news. We have all tried **to meet God’s standards** and continually fall short. The Lord met those high standards on our behalf, and His righteousness is imparted to us by grace, through faith. We can trust God without hesitation. Former Chaplain Leroy Brown was a devout man of faith, who served Corps, Country, and the Marine Corps League with honor. He also served a faithful God.

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Chaplain Ron