

“A Jesuit Padre in the Italian Campaign”
His Work – His Impressions
His Companions

by
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The following paper is so essentially personal that I offer little or no excuse for the title I have chosen, – “A Jesuit Padre in the Italian Campaign” – his work – his impressions – his companions. Possibly the only excuse I could make for this so egotistic work, is that when the late Dr. J. F. Kenney asked me to write it, he expressly stipulated that it should deal with a chaplain’s work from my own personal experiences and my individual point of view, – that it should take the form of an informal chat rather than a fully developed history of the Catholic Priest in action. He had, no doubt, in mind that some day more competent hands than mine would record in full the grand story of the Catholic Padre at home and abroad.

The story, as I give it now, began to take shape in my mind during the grim and bloody battle before Cassino. From then to the present day that same story has never left my mind. But I do not, and never have, wanted to narrate just another war story. I have therefore no intention of telling about the terrible destruction of war or of the shuddering nightmare that death in all its forms became for me. A report of mine, written during the battle of the Liri Valley, may indicate something of that aspect upon which I do not want to dwell. “I did not fear death so much for myself as for those entrusted to my care – although I have yet to meet the soldier in the front lines who does not know the fear of shell – or mine – or bullet. The destruction is devastating. Not a stone was left upon a stone in the houses and shops of the towns through which we pass – Cassino is about to fall – the Canadians are in Pontecorvo – the German defences are still holding on the Melfa River – we expect to break through soon – I would not have thought it possible for man to destroy so much in so short a time. They tell me that when we opened fire on May 11th some 2,000 guns – heavy – medium – and light artillery burst forth at the same time. Certainly the brilliancy of the fire seemed to turn night into day. All around us is death. The foul stench and nauseating odor of decaying flesh just stinks in one’s nostrils – this horror I’ll never be able to erase from my memory.” As I read these lines, it seems to me that all this would only shrivel up one’s very spirit and leave one dazed and shocked, were

it not that I know from my own experience, that through all the waste and horror of destruction and even in the midst of the rapine of war, there moves a spirit so vastly different, so completely opposed to all this evil – The Spirit of God. I should like then to place before you in this paper something of this other side of war wherein the Spirit of God does move. I realize that I cannot fully tell the story of the work of God, but I would like to tell the part I know and the share of the chaplain in it.

Our Holy Father Pope Pius XII, knowing that every chaplain needed to uphold the ideal of Christ, published an exhortation to chaplains in the armed forces (December 8, 1939). I take the liberty of quoting from this great exhortation. “Yours is the plan and aim of St. Paul, who boasted of not knowing anyone else nor of carrying anything else to the nations, but Christ, and Him crucified. Christ he carried by his life not less than by his word, in every place, in every circumstance, in private and in public, under the free winds of heaven, as in the bondage of chains.”

The inner significance of a Padre’s work and vocation as minister of Christ to the Canadian soldier is of supreme importance, and most Padres did not forget it. In fact, it was hard to forget it, for the soldier would not let us forget. The men to whom we ministered set a very high standard for their chaplain. They may never have put into words the fact that he should be a close follower and imitator of Christ. The words they used might be most inadequate at times in expressing this idea. But that is what they meant when they told you that above all else a Padre must be “sincere”. And how disappointed they were in their Padre if he should have given them the slightest cause to think him “insincere”. They did not want to find in their chaplain only a “good Joe” or simply one who made himself a useful and helpful welfare officer. They looked for the minister of Christ and were shockingly disappointed if they did not find him. It was, and even now is, the saddest indictment that can be made against any Padre to hear a boy speak as follows: “You know Padre Brown-Jones – he is a fine fellow and good sport. But, of course, I couldn’t think of going to him in any real spiritual difficulty. I wonder why he became a padre?” or that other phrase one heard now and then – “He makes a very good army officer, but he is no Padre for me”. It is unfortunately true that one did hear this or similar statements about this or that Padre – no names, no pack drill, as the saying goes but thank God very rarely. It does show, though, that sincerity and the spirit of Christ is what the boys wanted and expected in their Padre. The chaplain knew this and most of us tried to live up to this ideal the boys had of us and our work.

In the following paragraphs I intend to recount certain experiences of my own which bring out something of the spiritual side of a Padre’s ministry. It was the spiritual side to which the boys responded, as I well realize. And the experiences of other chaplains bear this out.

1. The first little tale tells of an evening in May 1944. It was the very

beginning of the Cassino show. The opening barrage – such a barrage had never been heard of before – was scheduled for the dark hours of that night. Yes, it was on May 11, 1944. It was my first night with the Artillery. I knew none of the boys personally. If I came to any of them that night it would not be as one who was well known and perhaps liked. I was a complete stranger to them all. If I made my rounds that night it would be only as a priest and they would receive me only as the minister of Christ. It was very dark as I made my way stumblingly towards the forward gun-sites. The Blessed Sacrament was with me, and as I came to each position I called each Catholic aside – and to those who so desired I gave Communion. There alone in the dark of night - a battle about to open – I, a stranger but a priest, brought Christ to each lad I could find. This picture and this experience will live long in my mind as almost a perfect picture of the relationship that exists between chaplain and soldier – the Padre must be above all else the minister of Christ, and that night I could be only that to the boys.

2. My first death and consequently my first burial in any Artillery Unit was also on this same Front. But possibly I am beginning at the wrong end. This story should properly have its beginning the day before the burial. I had been out to a certain Field Artillery Regiment under my care to say Mass for them. They were under constant fire so it was dangerous to have more than a few at Mass. I celebrated, therefore, for the few from Headquarters and consecrated Hosts to be given to the boys in Communion at the Gunsites. But among the few who came to the Mass itself was a Gunner, Mario Zecca. He went to confession and to Communion as the others – but somehow he impressed me just a little more than the rest – why I do not know. But in any case I was greatly consoled by the fact that he had been at this Mass when I got word of what happened to him. That same night he was out – as I understand the story – on a small recon and tangled with a mine. I could not be got immediately but after really strenuous efforts on the part of the Protestant Padre H-Capt. Smith the unit managed to get in touch with me in the morning. I came at once, but every care had been taken of the body by the M. O., a very fine Catholic Officer, Captain Murphy, and all that remained for me to do was to bury Gunner Zecca. When we left Mario Zecca lay in a small Canadian Cemetery just below Cassino. His grave is always covered with flowers. This is due to the care of the Italians nearby. But the memory of this fine boy – and the picture of that lad, in the prime of his life, as we lowered him into his hero's grave – will remain long in the minds of his friends and of his chaplain – who has often said a prayer for Mario (and of course those who share his lot).

3. Now let me turn back just a few months earlier. This time my memory recalls a place rather near Ortona. I don't suppose it does any harm to mention now that it was de San Leonardo water point. True, action was up in front of us, but it seemed a rather quiet spot. A group of my Engineers

– I was then stationed with the Engineers – had dug themselves in quite well, even before they erected their tents. They were under constant shell fire night and day – (I did not know it then). This was beginning to wear on them, too. Just about this time the Padres (both Catholic and Protestant) decided that it was about time we visited our outposts. Without a qualm or a shake we headed for the above mentioned spot and were greeted quite royally by the boys who seemed glad to see the Padres. We were chatting away quite nicely and cheerily – when we heard a long, low whistle and a thud nearby – then a few more whistles and some uncomfortably near explosions – the Padres mind it but the boys are quite unperturbed – “only a few shells, Padre, mostly duds”. Of course, I forgot to mention that at the first sound there was one Padre who made as if to duck, or something – the boys all laughed and the tension was gone, if tension there had been. This picture shows, I think, another side to the idea the boys have of a Padre – he must be with them and share with them what they go through. It seems our presence did help the boys and buck them up in their lonely work at that place just below San Leonardo.

4. On the same Front I had an experience that was along a totally different line. But it is an experience that is not altogether uncommon in the life of a priest of the Catholic Church. It happened in a little wayside chapel. I had just discovered it, sort of by itself. It was not too terribly damaged by the German shells that had come its way, nor had it suffered too much from the vandalism of our own troops. But it did need cleaning, if I were to use it for Mass. It was easy to get a number of willing hands for this, – I find our Catholic lads ever ready to lend a helping hand when it comes to preparing for Mass. With makeshift Italian brooms and the brawn of our strong arms we cleared the little chapel of a solid layer of dust and rubble. With all the willing helpers it did not take so terribly long. I notified all units near at hand that Mass would be said that evening. The turnout was a testimony of two things – the complete universality of the Roman Catholic Church and also of the tremendous desire of the average Catholic for the spiritual ministry of his priest. Besides my own Canadian laddies, we had boys from all parts of the British Isles, coloured folk from Africa in the persons of Basutos and Bechuanas, one or two white South Africans, not to speak of Americans, Italians, Mauritians, Indians, and one Yugoslav. Not too had a mixup is it? And all following most devoutly the same universal Mass. It made one think how the Church is everywhere and always the same for all mankind. I confess that my heart was still that night as I turned around in that little, not - too - badly - ruined chapel in Italy to give the last blessing of the Priest at Mass. I think that all the boys who were there that night must have felt something of what filled my heart – they were members of the Church of Christ, and I, His minister. I think that they, too, must have sensed something of the universality of the Church and the common appeal of its ministers. They

knew – perhaps more vividly than usual – that I, a priest of the Church, was there only for the spiritual needs of every lad present, no matter what his family, his colour, race or country. Perhaps it is my vanity, but I do love the memory of that service and no man can take it from me.

5. There is one further little story. I want to tell it as simply as I can, for I think it brings out even more than some of the other stories the spiritual importance of a Padre – at least at the hour of death. The scene of the tale takes place among those of the Gothic Line. Rather it is just through, above the Conca River – can you find it on the map? The action takes place in an A.D.S. The casualties are coming in fast. The doctors are doing a magnificent job in patching up the wounds and hiding the scars caused by the terrific engines of war at our and the German's disposal. But the medicos cannot cure everyone. There is a lad here near his end – the doctors have done all they could for him – their skill is of no more avail. The blood plasma they are using may help, but even the most sanguine of the doctors says there is no hope left. But the priest is there with the Holy Oils. The lad is still conscious – his confession is heard and the last Rites of the Church are given him. The boy is at peace, his mind at rest and he is ready to go. Despite the very real sufferings that are his, the smile on that lad's face is simply beatific.

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R.C.E.

I said Mass one morning for Lt. Bailey's Platoon, then scheduled to go into action that same night. Set up the altar at one end of a football field right out in the open under a blazing hot sun. There was not the slightest bit of shade or protection, but there was something of a thrill for one to say Mass for these grand dads about to go into action. As the time was short I gave an explanation of the General Absolution – said Mass – gave Absolution and all except two of the boys went to Communion. I was still with the RCASC when this took place.

After staying with 81 Arty Coy for a while returned to R.C.E. to find that the 12th Field Coy was to move the next morning, presumably, from what I could gather, for action. I saw, therefore, the 2 i-c, as the Major was away, and arranged for all the R.C.s to attend Mass. He was a little reluctant because he thought it would interfere with the preparations for the move, but I soon convinced him that it would not interfere in the slightest. I arranged the altar on the ball field. QMS. Kelly rounded the boys up. I heard some confessions – gave the others General Absolution said Mass and all without exception went to Communion. Only those boys who did not come to Mass were left without the Sacraments although some even of these had been to confession and Communion just a short while before.

Several times since leaving the R.C.E. I have dropped in on groups of

the Engineers to see how they are getting on.

R.C.A.

1. My first introduction to the Artillery was in company with Father Harrington. I was then staying with the Arty. Coy RCASC. We went around together. Father H. took this opportunity of introducing me to the boys of the Artillery. We said Mass – heard confessions and gave communion to the following groups, a: 5th Med. Refit. Pl. RCASC, b: B Echelon 11th Field Regt. RCA (some boys of a 1 Div. Arty Regt came to this Mass) c: RHQ 11th Field d: B Echelon 2 Medium e: B Echelon, 5 Medium. Though I was not yet officially transferred, this trip around with Father Harrington served as an extremely good introduction. It also served to give me an idea of the work of Father Harrington, with a real appreciation of it. But it was evident that this work was too much for one man, even a Father Harrington.

2. When I was finally transferred officially to AGRA I reported immediately to HQ. there to be informed that I was to be attached to 2 Cdn Medium Refit. RCA. Had supper with HQ. AGRA prior to reporting to 2 Med. Found on going to 2 Med. that Lt. Col. Legatt did not want the Padres up front but back in B Echelon. I know that this is a sad mistake for it has hampered my work quite considerably, but I understand that he is reconsidering this and will have us up nearer him in the future. As soon as I can see him I shall bring this matter up again.

But in all other matters he has been most cooperative. That very first night, although the Regt. was in the throes of (preparation for the great push, I visited the gun sites giving General Absolution to all the Catholics I could find.

3. Since that time I have kept on the go as far as circumstances have permitted. I have visited all the different parts of all the Canadian Units and some of the British. I have visited all the gunsites of 1, 2 and 5 Med. and 11 Field. My schedule has been really quite full on most days. The busiest days were those around the middle of the month, for instance, I could cite the programme for the three days, Saturday, May 13th – Sunday, May 14th – Monday, May 15th:

Saturday – Morning – Mass for B Echelon 1 and 5 Med. Everyone went to Communion.

Afternoon – Visited gunsites 2 Med. heard confessions and gave Communion.

Sunday – Morning – Mass for B Echelons of 1, 2 and 5 Med. Afternoon – Mass for RHQ 5 Med. Visited gunsites – confessions and Communions.

Monday – Morning – Mass for RHQ 1.1 Field Regt. RCA.

Afternoon – Visited gunsites – heard confessions gave Communion.

Among the boys who received Communion was Gunner M. Zecca who was killed the next day. I buried him on Wednesday and held a Memorial Service for him the same day.

NOTE

This is the first time I have served the Artillery (except for some small groups here and there). This experience has all the freshness of novelty. I know that this should perhaps not be true for I have so often said Mass and served troops in like condition that all the novelty and the strangeness of Mass in the open air with a group of devout young Catholic soldiers should have worn-off long ago. But I must confess that my experiences with the Artillery of this group have brought back to me a freshness and an experience as thrilling as it was almost forgotten. At one time I set up my altar in a shadowed spot along the tranquil flowing streams of the Liri Valley. Nothing very grand – just a little table – a blanket over it – my own flag draping the table – and my portable altar. At another time the altar is so completely unprotected – in the wide open air – the hot Italian sun pouring down on one's head – the bright blue of the heavens giving us a canopy all in our Lady's Colours. The boys gather round, sometimes in worshipful silence, sometimes the low murmur of the boys reciting their rosaries can be heard. (In one Regiment there is one lad – not terribly well educated but with a simple Faith that makes one wonder and praise God for it – who leads the Rosary. His Hail Mary, though not always correctly pronounced, can almost be felt as well as heard in the beauty of his Irish Faith. One can almost forget there is a war on – all is so quiet and so peaceful – until the sudden roar of guns opens up to your right and to your left – or a plane passes by overhead on its errand of destruction. It makes one realize the reality of it all. And afterwards visiting the men at their gunsites – bearing their confessions and giving Communion on the spot was a real consolation to me. I know that this is nothing new. Father Harrington has done it all before and I suppose does not even mention the marvellous work he has done amongst the boys. Father Cloutier too is having the same experience among his boys. I think he has visited every single A-A gunsite in his units. This is a tremendous task. He too has the consolation I have had of hearing confessions and giving Communion right on the very spots where the boys are risking everything they have. I know that the other chaplains have had or are having the same experiences, but somehow this is all so personal to me. Its freshness and the grand Catholicity of it all are my greatest consolation and my constant inspiration to continue working for the grand Catholic lads of these Regiments.

Before we say anything about the other Padres who were my companions in Italy, I would like to finish off my activities in that country by quoting from my diary for the period from September 16th to September 30th, 1944 and also from my report for October, 1944.

Saturday, September 16, 1944.

Expecting to move from this position soon. Can only make tentative arrangements for services tomorrow. Saw Fr. McNabb and agreed to have my boys of 182 go to Mass at 0900 hours in home or shed nearby. He would say Mass and I would hear confessions. This is only in case we don't move today – everything is so indefinite as yet. Also made arrangements with 178 to have Mass for them at 1000 hours. Had a long talk with Fr. Colonel Todd concerning my work with his Regiment. While there I got the address of L-Cpl. Arthur Mather's mother. I must write to tell her about her son, one of the finest of my little Artillery flock. The day before he was killed he had been at Mass – gone to Confession and received Communion. He was as well prepared for death as he could well be. Said Mass this evening in one of the most peculiar ways yet. Had arranged to celebrate for Queen Battery – got over there to find no table and none to be found – so said Mass right on the ground. Laid the altar linens flat on the ground – sounds peculiar but everything was all right for the place I chose to say Mass was a small ledge forming a natural table which I could use. The boys gathered around as usual and about half went to Communion. Unfortunately the announcement had not been made to the whole Battery and some missed out – some of my best boys like Bdr. Vaillancourt, who never misses Mass if it can be helped. In fact, after it was all over “Val” took me to task for not telling him. But he and the rest will be there tomorrow. (I have just heard that we won't leave until late tomorrow or the next day. Jerry still occupies our next position.)

Sunday, September 17, 1944.

Still in the same position, though we expect to move tonight. Had Mass for boys of 182 and all surrounding units in a big building near lines. Some four hundred boys must have been there. Every available bit of space was taken up by the boys. Fr. McNabb said the Mass and preached, while I and another chaplain heard confessions. About seventy-five went to Communion. It was quite a place to have Mass. The big guns were still pounding away outside but inside all was still and quiet, devout and prayerful. The big building had been hit several times and huge gaping holes torn in the roof, but not over our heads where we were hearing Mass. Except for the uniforms one might have imagined one was home on a Holy Name Sunday. A grand bunch of boys we have in these units. Those (and they are the majority) who

practice their faith really do so despite the horrors of war which they see all around them. Some boys came late to this Mass, so I took them over to 178 where I said Mass at 1000 hours. Quite a number of boys were able to come – about ten went to Communion. Returned to 182 to find advance Party getting ready to move. The rest of us go this evening. We are to move up to the Marano River, which is very much under German shell fire. We must move at night so as to avoid unwelcome notice and consequent shelling. We are willing. I can move at a moment's notice so I don't have to worry about getting ready. In any case Prud'homme always does a good job. Just heard we move at 2100 hours. Late enough.

Thursday, September 21, 1944.

What a horrible day this has turned out to be. I had thought we would have rain but had hardly expected the downpour that did come our way. I went to bed early last night, hoping to get a good night's rest, but alas for the hopes and expectations of men. About ten or thereabouts I woke with rather a start. It must have been raining for some time for the water was simply pouring down my pup tent. Possibly the reason of my awakening was not the rain but the flashlight of Padre Flint wandering here and there trying to rescue his bed from the raging torrents coming down the hillside and collecting – so he says – in his diggings. Forced out of his dugout, he found refuge in his truck. Just about this time, chuckling rather maliciously at his misfortune, I realize things are beginning to happen to me. My bed is still dry but my pup tent falls in. About this time, therefore, I begin to think that I could possibly find shelter in the cab of my car – so painstakingly I inch my way into my clothes and run for the cab. But I can't sleep. It is cold – and wet – and miserable. After about an hour of this I can stand no more. Better to try to fix up my pup tent and crawl back, if possible. I do so, even though it means slithering hither and yon in mud. But my bed is dry anyway, – I was lucky. Poor Tiny Rohleder, my neighbor, sat up in the middle of the night to find a regular stream pouring into his slit-trench. He was so mad – words could not express his feelings. All he could do was to burst into tears. And that about expressed all our feelings. But the boys who really had it tough were the boys on the guns. Completely without protection they had to stay at their guns, firing all through the night. I watched them for a while, at a distance, and with the protection of my car's cab. It was only in the morning when I went over to visit the gun crews that I realized what a really hard job the gunners had had. And by that time they had managed to get some covering for themselves, but they were still wandering around in mud. It was cold, still they must stay at their job ready always at the word of command to fire. And the wonderful part about the whole thing is that the boys are ready with a smile and a joke to meet every difficulty or inclemency that may come their

way.

It is possible we may be on the move soon. According to reports they have lost contact up in front with the retreating enemy. If they have we are soon due for a move but to get out of here will have to have the L.A.D. lorry to pull most of us out of this mud. Unless, of course, it dries up again.

Friday, September 22, 1944.

Well, we did move. But not till the afternoon. In the morning went around "Q" Battery to (finish giving out cigarettes to the boys who had run short. I had started around the battery the night before but what with talking and chatting to the different boys in each sub-section... One section had rigged up for themselves, with charge-boxes and tarpaulin, a rather comfortable little cubby-hole. Of course, when six or seven boys get in together, there isn't much room left. This was the last place I reached last night. As I got there they invited me in to share a spot of the Pup that cheers, this despite the sardine quality already existing therein. The time passed very, very quickly and darkness grew upon us without notice. Hesitatingly and almost gropingly I had to wend my way back to my pup tent. In the morning went around to the rest of the subsections to finish giving out the fags. Found one gun completely mired in the mud and the boys working so hard to pull the heavy brute out of where it had dug itself into. Lent a hand, which I think the boys appreciated.

In the afternoon orders given to move. Difficulty experienced in getting the two-wheeled drive vehicles up the muddy slopes of the hills that had been such grand protection for us up to the present, but which now insist on keeping us in. But we get away. We settle in the outskirts of Rimini. This time we are in billets.

MY COMPANIONS

This is perhaps the hardest part of this paper. It is easy to say things when dealing with oneself but I want to do justice to a grand group of men with whom I was privileged to associate. Perhaps I cannot cover them all and certainly I cannot treat them as fully as I would like.

My Superiors – These were three in number, Fr. Maurice Roy, Fr. James McIsaac and Fr. Dennis Harrington. I shall say but a word about each in turn.

Fr. Maurice Roy – This quiet-spoken son of French Canada was a grand person to work with and for. Though not a great administrator he had one particular quality that was essential to a Senior Chaplain – he trusted his Chaplains implicitly and at all times was ready to help in the work to be done. If fault he had, it lay in this that he sometime did too much for the field work and not enough of the administration. He was well liked by all,

Protestant and Catholic alike. As one senior officer told me, – he is a perfect gentleman and a saint. When he was made Bishop of Trois-Rivières it was no surprise to me, for the Archbishop of Messina had foretold this in December, 1943, when he said to me “Fr. Roy will be bishop – I will recommend it – he is a saint.”

Father J. K. McIsaac – “Father Jimmy” to all who knew him. This title shows the respect and affection most of his Chaplains had for him. He succeeded Fr. Roy just before the Battle of Cassino. Unfortunately he came to us following a nervous breakdown and the anxiety and worry of his office during the trying times of 1944-45 never allowed him to show his full qualities. Though frequently on edge – nervous and irritable – Father Jimmy was always zealous, always kind, always a friend in need – and above all, a real priest.

Father Dennis Harrington – This priest is probably – I speak under correction – the most extraordinary Chaplain of the war. A man loved and respected by all. I have never heard any soldier use anything but the highest of praise. I think “Dinny” as he was called was known to practically every soldier in the First Canadian Corps, – and loved, – there was nothing like it. I quote from a note I wrote about a Sergeant Major (Jim MacKay) Fr. Harrington and my first coming to the 2nd Medium RCA. The Sergeant Major is a character. I will never forget the very first time I met him. Officially I was not yet attached to the 1st Canadian AGRA, but I knew that I would soon be the Catholic Padre of the Gunners. Fr. Harrington, a Chaplain loved and respected by all ranks as a man and as a Padre, was showing me around. From that day I would be on my own – a difficult task for anyone with the Gunners but doubly so following in the footsteps of one so well liked as “Dinny” Harrington. But to get back to the Sergeant Major. The first glimpse I had was a square-jawed, bronze-coloured-dark-haired head that one might have said had been sculptured from the very rock of Scotland. But there was a smile so radiant that it brought to life and light this piece of Scottish granite, – “a thousand welcomes, Father. Why don’t you come around to see us more often”, – all this to Fr. Harrington, not to me. “Not staying long, have just come to introduce Fr. McGivern; he is your new Catholic Padre” says “Dinny”. And then the sunshine fades away in incredulity. – “You’re not leaving us, Father. What’ll we do” – And the Rock of Scotland looks at me as if I were the cause of their Padre leaving, – and I begin to wonder what I had done. Misgiving as to my future work was strong in my mind, for hadn’t Fr. Harrington just warned me “If you wish to get along in this regiment, you must be on good terms with the Sergeant Majors, especially one of them, Sergeant Major McKay”. And here he was, looking at me as though I were nothing on earth. “Oh, Fr. McGivern will take my place” says Fr. Harrington. “Well, all I have to say” says McKay, “is, he had better be good.” What a reception from a dour, stolid Scotch Presbyterian, but what a

tribute expressed and implied to Fr. Harrington. It would be impossible to tell all the work that Fr. Harrington did, – and I won't attempt to say more than this, – I do not know of a unit or group, no matter how small, in the first Canadian Corps that was not at some time or other serviced by this zealous, indefatigable priest. But lest some one should think he is perfect, let me say that he is Irish, with an Irishman's quick and hasty temper, – and also not an easy man to work with. But withal let me say that he is a gay companion, a kindly friend, an ardent voyageur, a grand priest.

I cannot delay too long on each one, much as I would like to. Let us now take a group, the Hospital Chaplains. Some of these I knew well, others only in passing, but I heard nothing but praise for all, or nearly all of them. A list of them – Fr. Fitzgerald, Fr. McManus, Fr. Taylor, O.P., Fr. LeSage, Fr. Sullivan, Fr. Chiasson, Fr. Vallely, Fr. Malone, and possibly I should add here, Frs. MacCormac and Waide. I will not attempt to say something about each one. I can't do this, except to say in general that all performed fully and zealously the arduous task that was theirs.

I would like to talk of the others, but space and time do not permit. The following I have known and liked – with great respect for their work, – Fr. Noah Warnke, Fr. Raoul Cloutier, Fr. Perky Johnson, Fr. Charles MacNabb, Fr. Hubert Gehl, Fr. Leo Smyth, Fr. Macdonald of the Cape Breton Highlanders, Fr. Joseph Wilhelm, Fr. Tessier, O.M.I., Fr. Ryan, C.S.S.R., Fr. George Cherrier, Fr. Claude LaBoissiere, O.F.M. It is hard to single out any one. Fr. Wilhelm won the M.C. and Fr. George Cherrier the M.B.E. Their stories have been told elsewhere so I need not give them here. Fr. Macdonald, according to what Fr. McIsaac, then D.A.P.C. 1 Cdn. Corps, told me, should have been decorated with the V.C., except for the prejudice of his Commanding Officer. Fr. Cloutier was perhaps overzealous, but his love for the church and her honour is outstanding. Much misunderstood even by his close superiors he was and is a great priest. Fr. Percy Johnson I have known for a long time. It is hard, therefore, to say even a few words that would be fitting. He served zealously for almost six years and during that time won the respect and love of all ranks. If he and other Chaplains did not receive the full recognition of their merits, that is the fault of some of the Senior Chaplains in the very highest positions of the service. Father Johnson will always do excellent work in the service, of God. Fr. Leo Smyth is one I dare not speak too highly about. Therefore, I will content myself with the following statement from His Brigadier. "Padre Smyth is one of the bravest, finest men I know. I have recommended him for the Military Cross." That Father Smyth did not finally get this decoration is certainly no fault of his. Fr. Charles McNabb had possibly one of the hardest jobs in the army. He served in a Divisional Artillery Group. It is hard, not because of danger, though at times that was not lacking, but because of the separation and dispersal of the different sections. He performed his task nobly and well. I

have seen him at work, and to me he seemed all that one could want or desire in a Catholic priest and chaplain. The others, whose names were mentioned already, Frs. Warnke, Gehl, Tessier and LaBoissiere, deserve more than this mention, but, unfortunately, it is so hard to do justice to them all. There are many other names I could mention, but it was not my privilege to know them at work. Some of them were good friends of mine, but that does not make up for my deficiencies in knowledge of their work.

In the list of my companions there is one who, though not a priest, was my associate and companion more close and more real than all the others. That is the soldier who was my batman, – driver. He is a French Canadian by the name of Armand Prud'homme. He was with me through the Italian Campaign until he was wounded most severely by stepping on a mine not far from Ravenna. I think the world and all of this little man, for he was not very big. Everywhere I went, he went with me (he drove me) and in everything I did he shared my lot. He used to prepare the altar – keep my belongings in order. I never had to worry when he was with me, – he learned to serve Mass so as to share more closely my daily Mass. He was not perfect, – having many faults perhaps, – but I miss him now – can I say more. God bless him.