the story of
Chaplain Kapaun
Patriot Priest of the Korean Conflict
by father arthur tonne

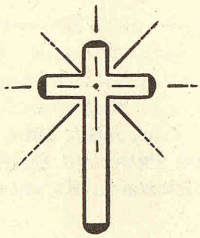
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The Story of Chaplain Kapaun

PATRIOT PRIEST OF THE KOREAN CONFLICT



by

FATHER ARTHUR TONNE

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DEDICATION

TO THE FATHER AND MOTHER OF CHAPLAIN KAPAUN AND TO THE PARENTS OF ALL WHO MADE THE SUPREME SACRIFICE IN KOREA.

In using the terms 'saint' and 'sanctity' we do not wish to anticipate the decision of Mother Church regarding the sanctity of the subject of this story. We respectfully submit to her final judgment.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:

The author is gratefully indebted to Bishop Carroll of Wichita for the honored assignment of writing this book; to the parents of Father Kapaun for opening their home and their hearts to me; to the Catholic Military Ordinariate of New York City; to the clergy and sisters who brought Father Kapaun to the priesthood; to Captain Ralph A. Nardella who succeeded Father Kapaun as the religious leader of his fellow prisoners; to Col. Eugene Field, the Commanding Officer of the 1st Cavalry Division; to Major Gerald Fink who carved the now famous crucifix in memory of his beloved Chaplain; to Officers Mayo, Dowe, McCool, Curry, McClain, O'Connor and Burke who graphically wrote of their heroic chaplain; to P. F. C. Ritter whose kind letter was the first to tell Bishop Carroll that Father Kapaun was captured and was alive; to Emil Melcher, his cousin and most intimate friend; to the newspapers and magazines of the United States for the generous columns of copy of the Father Kapaun Story; to the hundreds who have written letters of condolence to Mr. and Mrs. Kapaun and to the Bishop of Wichita; to the honorable Mayor Titus of Paterson, New Jersey, and the citizens of that community for their generous contributions to the Memorial Fund; to "The Morning Call" of Paterson for the publicity given to the memorials of Father Kapaun blessed in St. Michael's Church of that city; to Bishop James McNulty of Paterson for blessing the crucifix and bronze plaque.

Above all, to Father Kapaun himself for the inspiration of his life as a patriot-priest.

INTRODUCTION

Mine is a proud privilege to write this preamble to the "Story of Father Kapaun." Captain Emil Joseph Kapaun, priest of the Wichita Diocese in Kansas, died a prisoner of war in a Chinese Communist hospital in Korea, May 23, 1951. Thirty-five at death—a priest ten years—how quickly fled both life and career—yet he emerged as one of the great heroes of the Korean Conflict.

As his Bishop, I remember well his resolute character, his lustrous career as a parish priest. His fellow soldiers recount his extraordinary bravery on the field of battle—for it was their unanimous testimony which prompted the United States Government to confer upon Chaplain Kapaun (in absentia), the Bronze Star and Distinguished Service Cross.

But it was in a loathsome Communist prison camp somewhere along the Yalu River that the character, courage and constancy of Father Kapaun burgeoned into full maturity.

His correspondence during active combat has been recorded herein, without comment, but even the casual reader can hardly fail to discern his steady growth in the spiritual life. In his Epistle to the Romans, Chapter VIII, St. Paul describes the undeclared war which exists in every soul, a continuous battle, usually for life, between the spirit and the flesh for supremacy.

That inner conflict in the soul of Father Kapaun had been resolved and its dissolution gave him a wonderful internal peace and an unusual external serenity. Father Kapaun, acording to the testimony of grateful comrades, went all out for God and his fellowmen, and forgot himself completely. This young soldier, although he never

expressed it, knew that peace of soul "which surpasseth all understanding." Somehow God told him that he had walked, steadfastly, to the summit of his priesthood.

Such was his impact upon his fellow soldiers in fierce, bloody encounters that they called him "Christ on the Battlefield." Such was his impress on his fellow prisoners in the grim compounds of Korea, that they called him "More than a man—a Saint". Sick, emaciated, in extreme pain—waiting in the very vestibule of death, this young priest smiled to his comrades as he was removed to a 'hospital' which the soldiers knew was a morgue. Like our Lord in His agony on the cross, he whispered, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do."

Father Kapaun had comforted, assisted thousands of men of all faiths in their journey to eternity. He himself, however, was forsaken in his extremity. In his final lonely hours on this earth, he was separated from his sobbing fellow prisoners—he had not been able to say Mass for seven months; there was no one to say the prayers for the dying over him, no one to anoint him at the last. Father Kapaun died as did his Master on Calvary, amid human filth and awful blasphemy. Of such gigantic stature do "little souls" become through the grace of God.

May all of us who read this book about Father Kapaun be granted, through the grace of God, the "Shibboleth" which will betray us both in word and action as followers of the divine Master.

+ MARK K. CARROLL
Bishop of Wichita

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CHAPTER ONE

IN THE MIDST OF THE TEACHERS

It was April, 1916. Easter Sunday was just a few days away. In a little farm home, three miles southwest of Pilsen in east central Kansas, Enos and Elizabeth Kapaun were awaiting the birth of their first child. All was in



The Kapaun home

readiness. The bed had been moved near the stove in the kitchen. There, on April 20 at 11:30 in the morning, the young couple welcomed their infant son into the world. It was Holy Thursday, a day of joy that commemorates the ordination of the first Christian priests. Was there some

blessed omen in the birth of their first boy on this Anniversary of the Last Supper? The pious parents hoped so.

They were a simple, substantial, hardworking couple, whose deep Catholic faith had grown sturdy and strong, founded as it was in century upon century of flourishing Catholicism in Bohemia.

The new arrival on the Kapaun farm was baptized a few weeks after his birth. The church record has this entry in Latin: "On the 9th day of May, 1916, I baptized Emil Kapaun, born on the 20th day of April, 1916, the son of Enos and Elizabeth Kapaun (born Hajek). The godparents were John Melcher and Cecilia Melcher, his wife. Fr. John Sklenar."

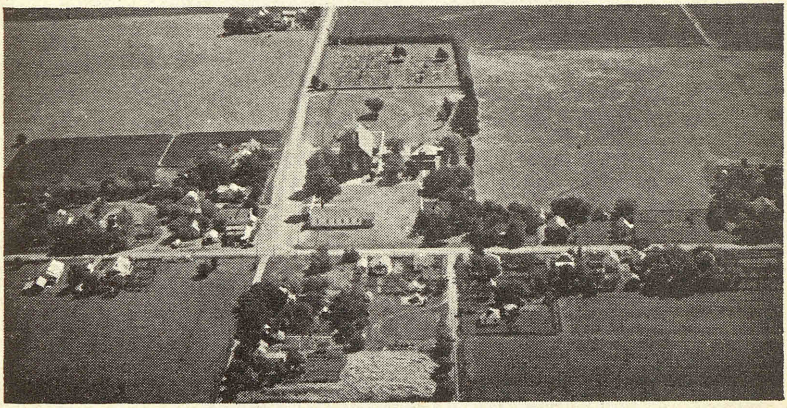
The religious foundation of these good people dates back to the 9th century when St. Cyril and St. Methodious brought the faith to the three Bohemian provinces of the Austrian Empire, Bohemia proper, Moravia and Silesia. The seeds of this faith, so firmly sown by these missionaries, spread their roots down through the ages and eventually to the New World across the sea. Two heroic-sized stone statues of these apostles stand in niches on the front outside wall of the church in Pilsen, Kansas.

Pilsen is a tiny crossroads community forty miles south of Abilene, Kansas, the boyhood home of President Eisenhower.

By 1890 forty-six Bohemian families had settled in Pilsen. The soil was fertile, but hard to work. The Santa Fe Railroad held much of the land, but was anxious to sell it, even at a low price, to the ambitious immigrants. Houses, barns, and fences had to be built; horses, wagons, and implements had to be secured. The railroads had much business and the settlers much strenuous labor.

To keep their faith alive, the pioneers gathered on Sundays in the "Beauty of the West" school under the leadership of Jacob Rudolph, who read from the Holy

Bible, taught young and old from his book of Gospel Instructions, and trained the children in religious song. He made arrangements for a Catholic priest to come every Easter season, so that the people might receive the Sacraments. With his team of horses he drove as far as Emporia, sixty miles east, to bring the priests out to Pilsen.

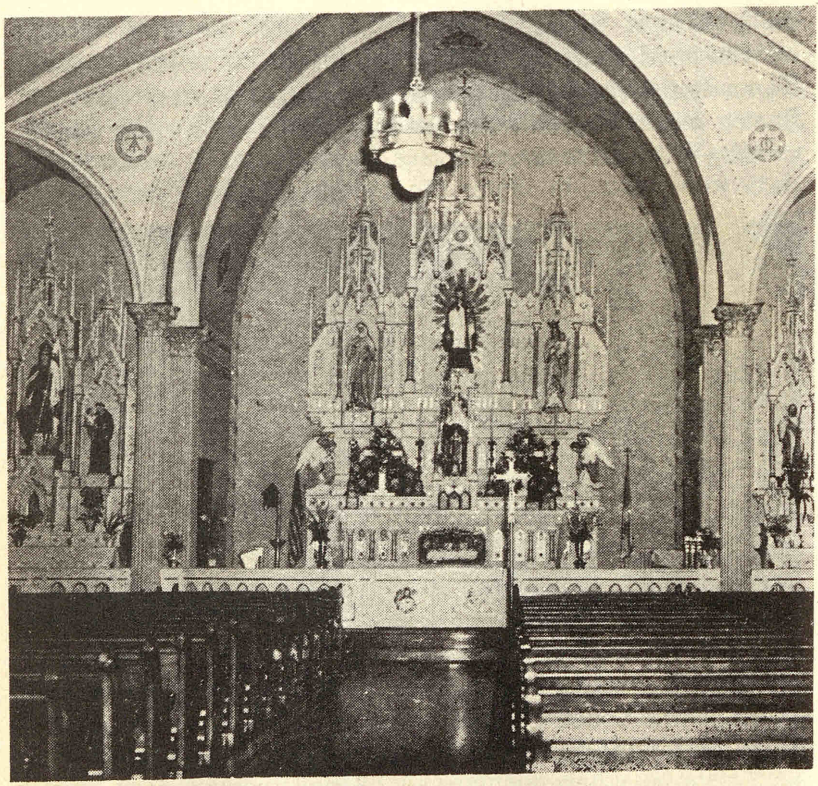


Panorama of Pilsen. Upper center shows church grounds.

St. John Nepomucene, patron of the parish, was born in Bohemia about the year 1340 and takes his last name from Nepomuk, his birthplace. He is the principal patron of Bohemia, where, in days of blessed memory, the people of that country prayed for his protection against floods and calumnies and for help in making a worthy confession.

A life-sized statue of this martyr priest stands above the high altar of the Pilsen Church. His right index finger is placed against his lips as a reminder of his sacrifice in keeping inviolate the seal of the confessional, the solemn and serious responsibility of the priest never to reveal a sin heard in the tribunal of penance.

The present imposing edifice was built in 1915. The very heart of the village is this towering Gothic church with its 120-foot steeple, visible for miles around. On the



St. John Nepomucene Church, Pilsen, Kansas

ten-acre parish plot are five buildings: the church which seats 650, a rectory, a school, a combination hall and gym, and a convent. There is also a well-kept cemetery. About 175 families, mostly farmers, live today within the parish limits, that comprise an area of about ten by twelve miles.

The village proper lists two filling stations, two grocery stores, and a postoffice. The west and north sides of the parochial plot are lined with a rim of simple but substantial dwellings, homes of widows who want to live as close as possible to the church. Five widowed grandmothers living

north of the church meet every evening in the home of Grandma Reznicek to say their Rosary in Bohemian.

The very first settler to arrive in the territory was Vit



Mother holds 11-month-old Emil — Dad holds a kitten

Franta, who inspected the land and gave a favorable report. On February 26, 1874, Jacob Vinduska and Mike Franta came with their families from Chicago.



Four-year-old scholar

Enos Kapaun was born in Czechoslovakia in 1880. He was of German and Bohemian ancestry. Among his treasured keepsakes is the passport issued to his family when they made the long voyage to America. Enos was then seven years old. He likes to tell of that ocean voyage, the train ride to Florence, Kansas, and the wagon trek to Pilsen.

Elizabeth Hajek Kapaun was born twelve miles from Wakeeney, in Trego County, Kansas, in 1895, of Bohemian parents. The Hajeks moved to Marion County when their little girl was three years old. On May 18, 1915, Enos and Elizabeth were married in the Church at Pilsen by Father John Sklenar.

This pioneer priest, who later became Monsignor, was pastor of Pilsen for forty-two years. As a boy, Kapaun often remarked sometimes jokingly, sometimes seriously: "I want to be just like Father Sklenar."

How did this Kansas farm boy become an idol, hero, and saint to men of every creed and calling? The elements are found in his home, his church, and his school.

His infant eyes fell upon holy pictures of all kinds and sizes still hanging on the walls of the Kapaun home. His infant ears heard daily prayers in English and Bohemian. His little hands were folded between the calloused palms of his father and the gentle fingers of his mother. From their deep and natural piety he caught what his mother thoughtfully expressed as his predominant characteristic, the trait that made him stand out, even as a boy: "He was always close to God."

Holy cards, prayer books, religious magazines and newspapers were always at hand. Before he ever learned to make out the words, little Emil indicated his later love for reading and study. He liked to look at holy pictures, especially when someone explained their meaning.

The accompanying photo, taken when he was four,

shows him studying a picture of a religious publication, the name of which his mother does not remember. She does remember, however, that when he was posing for the picture he anxiously asked her: "Mama, how much longer will it take? Do I have to sit here all the time?"



Six years old and ready to go

She also recalls that, when he was only six years old, he caught a five-pound channel catfish. He was so excited

that he ran all the way home, leaving pole, line, and fish near the bank. Mama and daddy had to come and see his catch. But he had forgotten to anchor his fish; it had flipped back into the water!

His early prowess with the fishing pole is attested by a neighbor, Joe Meysing, who went fishing with his hired man in the creek near the Kapaun home. They had the best possible bait and fishing tackle. Little Emil happened to come to the same spot and joined them. The men felt sorry for the boy, who had no modern fishing equipment. Confidently the lad dropped his line near the bank. In a very short time he pulled out a beautiful three pound fish, took it off the line, smiled and trotted home with his catch, leaving the experienced fishermen speechless.

One afternoon seven-year-old Emil was sitting on the bank, waiting patiently for a bite, when he noticed a long-legged kingfisher, strutting along a shallow stretch in the creek. That evening, seated at supper, he surprised his parents with this remark: "Mom, I saw a stork this afternoon and I asked him to bring me a baby brother."

With a reminiscent smile his mother adds: "A year later the stork did bring him a baby brother."

Emil was eight years old when his brother Eugene arrived on March 10, 1924. There were no other brothers or sisters.

His mother recalls, eyes misty with tears, the days when he was learning to serve at the altar. In spare moments he hurried out into the yard and knelt before a tree with folded hands. He would practice each gesture used by the servers over and over again. To serve as an acolyte he must be perfect!

Later he built an altar in the front room of their home. Often, even when he was playing out in the yard, he managed to steal away to pray at this favorite spot,



Emil and baby brother Eugene

and to play at being a "priest". With the first breath of spring, before the flowers in their own garden were in bloom, he searched the fields and woods and creek banks for blossoms to adorn his altar.

On their 160-acre farm, which Enos Kapaun has worked for over forty years, there was always something to be done. Unlike the average boy, young Kapaun never dodged work. He looked for it. Often, particularly in the evening, when there was a chance to relax, Emil picked up a hoe and went to work in the garden, or he would chop weeds along the fence rows, even in the distant fields.

For recreation he would take a dip in the stream that flows near their home, or, with his fishing pole over his



Kapaun's handwriting the year before he was ordained

shoulder, he would seek out his favorite fishing spot. Running and playing in the fields, hunting, hiking to unusual places, working or playing—what he did—was

done well, earnestly and with vigor. He was skilled in repairing and building implements, a knowledge which, in his future ordeal, was to be of vital assistance to him and his fellow prisoners.

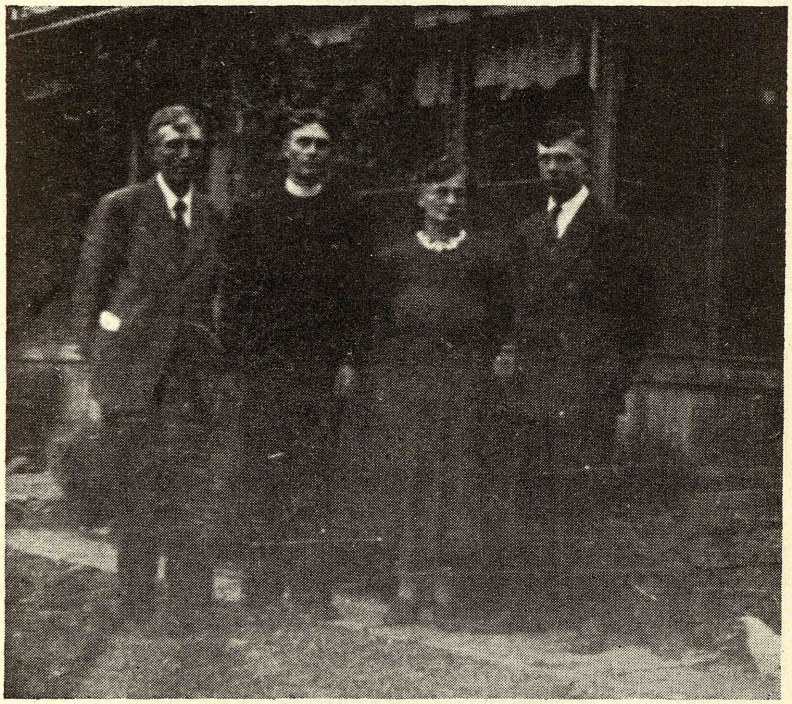
From his parents he acquired traits that contributed to his virile character. He had a typical Bohemian temperament. He was quiet, retiring; yet possessed of a keen sense of humor revealed by a wry but inviting smile. He had the spirit of neighborliness that abounds among his people, who will gather together in the village when chores are finished, exchanging views on every possible topic. The children and young people are usually part of these informal and congenial groups. In fact, one of the most admirable notes of country life, and especially of this community, is the close and affectionate association between parents and children. Above all, their Catholic faith is the warp and woof of their lives.

The silver spire of the Pilsen church is something more than physical. It is the center, not only of the spiritual and educational activities of the community but also of its social life. Bohemians love to dance, particularly the polka. They thoroughly enjoy carnivals and cakewalks, suppers and bazaars. They like to celebrate, no matter what the occasion, and practically all their social celebrations are held in the parish hall and the church basement.

In addition to general characteristics, Emil inherited from his father and mother that rare character combination of a kindly disposition plus tenacity and determination. These traits he displayed to the very day of his death.

In appearance, Emil had an arresting grin, wide set eyes, a strong nose, chin firm and deeply cleft, and the ever ready smile. He had a drawling, down-to-earth sense of humor.

Somehow his parents bequeathed to their boy a spirit of sacrifice, an acceptance of things as they are, an ability to face facts and situations, and an abiding assurance that there is Someone who directs the soul along the right path.



Dad, Father Emil, Mother, Eugene

On September 5, 1922, at the age of six, Emil began his formal education at the Pilsen School, District 115, in a building owned by the parish and still in use. The school was staffed by three Sisters Adorers of the Precious Blood, of Wichita, Kansas.

His agile mind and retentive memory enabled him to

complete the eight primary grades in six years, with very little effort and with almost perfect marks. His teachers testify that he grasped a subject at once.

"He was always ahead of himself. He certainly did not have to study hard," says Sister Coletta, who taught him in the eighth grade.

At times the teacher called upon Emil to explain to his classmates some difficult problem in arithmetic. He was so unassuming that no one took offense.

In religion class Father Sklenar frequently asked him to explain points to the less talented. Most of this instruction was given in Bohemian, the puzzling language which young Kapaun was determined to read and write as well as speak! Although English was the usual medium at home, he and his mother were wont to converse in her native tongue.

Sister Clare, who gave Emil private lessons in Bohemian, recalls how he would read the Bible in that language, welcoming corrections from classmates who were more familiar with the difficult tongue.

"He was a real boy," she says, "ever ready to tease and joke, an extremely clever mimic, imitating his teachers and classmates, but always inoffensively."

The Pilsen playground adjoins the church. Emil frequently slipped away during recreation periods into church for a brief visit and a few moments of quiet prayer.

During his second year in school, May 29, 1924, he received his First Holy Communion.

Emil had almost perfect attendance during practically all six years of grade school, an astounding accomplishment, for the Kapaun home is a long three miles from school, the winters are unusually severe, and the roads often impassable. The lad would arrive at church an hour before the others in order to serve Mass for Father

Sklenar. This service he continued on free days and during vacation.



First Holy Communion

In the spring and fall he was often seen cycling to school with a load of wild flowers on the handlebars. These he had gathered for the altar, especially for the Blessed Mother to whom he had a deep devotion.

His mother tells of an amusing incident that happened to Emil when he was about ten years old. She was extremely busy and asked him to attend to the milking. For some reason, one cow was jittery; she would not stand still. Concluding that the cow missed the skillful handling of Mrs. Kapaun, Emil put on a dress belonging to his mother. The jumpy animal stood stock still while Emil milked successfully!

Another time, when his brother Eugene was about eight years old, he told Emil that he would like to have a threshing machine.

"I'll make you one," said Emil. "I'm going in the shop and don't bother me until I get it finished."

He pounded and hammered for hours and finally came forth with a toy machine. Eugene said it would not work. Emil then poured some sand into one end and it came out the other, something like a threshing machine. Emil was ever resourceful and his little brother satisfied.

He was graduated from the eighth grade in Marion on May 18, 1928, and the next fall enrolled in the Pilsen High School, which offered a two-year course. During those two years his cousin, Emil Melcher, lived with the Kapauns. They became close, life-long friends. They drove to and from school in Melcher's two-wheeled pony cart.

The high school Sisters, who promoted various contests, at one time offered a prize for the best birdhouse. The two Emils set to work. Every spare moment they had a hammer or saw in hand, until finally, they finished a 22-room dwelling. Next they found an old telephone pole, sawed it off twelve feet from the ground, nailed

their house to its top, and set it up on the school grounds. Their house won first prize and became a favorite rendezvous for a variety of birds.



Emil 'Ounces' Kapaun, hand upraised;
Emil 'Pounds' Melcher, to his left.

The cousins were most conscientious about preparing their lessons. The kitchen table was their desk. Kapaun

took great pains with the drawings for his science book. Often his mother came into the kitchen late at night to find her son diligently drawing and arranging specimens, while the Melcher lad, much stouter and less studious, was leaning on the table sound asleep.

A letter from Emil's teacher in his sophomore year gives many sidelights on his character and disposition.

Angelus School
Grinnell, Kansas
January, 17, 1954

"Dear Father Tonne,

"At your request, I will try to jot down some of the random thoughts that drift back from my teaching career 25 years ago.

"Emil was a sophomore the year I taught him. He was a most conscientious lad, studious and prayerful, though he never made a show of his ability or his inner goodness. In religion class he could always answer Father Sklenar. Emil read his Bible in Bohemian and would ask his Bohemian-speaking class members to check him when he faltered. This happened seldom, for he was much in earnest about learning the difficult as well as the simple Bohemian.

"Latin was Emil's big interest as he knew it would be important should he continue his studies. His good grades and the ease with which he mastered every new vocabulary, declension, and conjugation were very rewarding when he took an examination in Latin at Conception the next year. Emil wrote back with some pride that he passed the test with a grade of 96%. It was to the intelligent, industrious pupil rather than to the teacher that credit should be given.

"Emil was always deeply interested in a magazine about the foreign missions called 'The St. Columban

Mission Society'. He read it eagerly, and each month sent to its publishers his spiritual bouquet of prayers and sacrifices.

"When I realized that Emil was in earnest about becoming a priest, I called him aside and mentioned that, if his parents had not the means to send him to the seminary, which seemed to be his only worry, he might ask the Columban Fathers to accept him without any financial burden. I checked his letter in which he gave his age, class, ambition and difficulty. The Columban Fathers said they would accept him without any financial assistance. Sister Clare suggested that we discuss this with Father Sklenar, who was upset over this decision and said he should be a parish priest and that he would pay Emil's way. Emil and his parents agreed to the pastor's plan. The lad seemed content just so he could become a priest, but he always kept his interest in foreign missions.

"One Christmas shortly before he was ordained, he sent me such a huge Spiritual Bouquet that it brought tears to my eyes. There were many prayers and sacrifices on the list, almost all of them for thirty days.

"The only material souvenirs I have of Father Kapaun are the two holy cards he enclosed in the invitation to his First Mass; but my grandest souvenir is the blessed memory of having had this conscientious, studious and saintly lad in my class.

Respectfully yours,
Sister M. Vitalia"

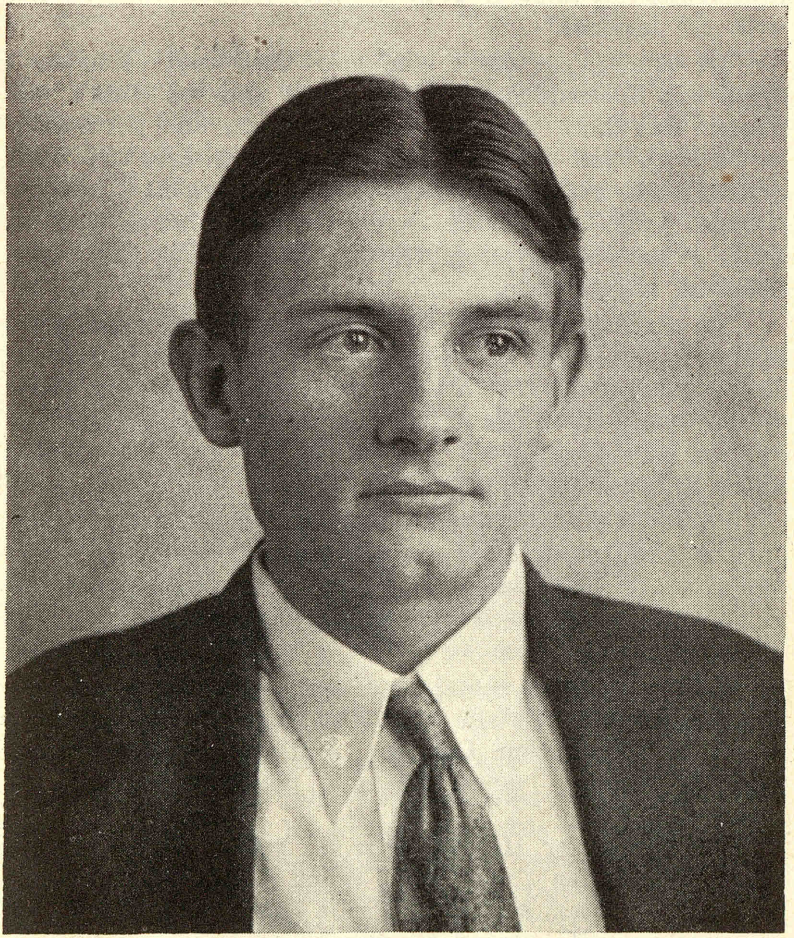
CHAPTER TWO

WISDOM, AGE, AND GRACE

When Emil Kapaun went to Conception, Missouri, in September of 1930, it was not specifically a seminary, but a boarding high school and college with a strictly classical course. Most of the students did not go on for the priesthood, according to Father Edward Malone, O. S. B., professor at the time and now rector of the seminary, who writes:

"I well remember Father Kapaun as a student. Thinking of him now is somewhat like thinking of a mystery story after you have read the ending. Had you been more observant you might have spotted the clues the author divulged, which would have led you to guess the ending before you reached the last page. So it was with Father Kapaun. Now one remembers little things about him which were not significant then, but which might have let you know what sort of man he would be when the going was difficult, and he became involved in a crisis. Only one would hardly have suspected Emil Kapaun of ever becoming involved in a crisis. He was quiet, almost shy, just a nice boy to have around. . . .

"But when you think of him now, you begin to remember things—the way he played football, for example. He lingered around the edges without anyone's suspecting his being there. He was not a particularly muscular or rugged boy and hardly had the physique to make a regular berth on a football team, even one as anemic and battered as ours was. But he did play, and you would usually find him crawling out from under a pile-up, and you wondered



At Conception Seminary, age 18

how he happened to be there at all. He sort of reversed the formula of another great soldier, 'he got there fustest with the leastest.'

"Of course, you can't win wars that way. You can't even win football games that way, and we didn't win many. But there was a certain toughness and pertinacity in the man that always seemed to get him into the midst of things, no matter how hopeless the struggle. I imagine it must have been much the same with him in the last grim game he played along the Yalu. The game was hopeless, but he stuck to his job.

"In academic matters, Father Kapaun was much more successful. Quiet and retiring in his manner in this as in all things, he was always near the top of his class. Others were more flashy and brilliant, but in the long run he seemed to work himself to the top like a large stone in a bucket of sand."

Father Malone describes with feeling the retreat their former pupil made before returning to the service for the last time. He concludes: "We are very proud to have had some little share in training this great soldier and this excellent priest. Also we feel very humble about it."

From schoolmates and professors come these interesting and revealing details regarding the years Emil Kapaun spent at Conception College. Without exception, they describe him as "quiet, friendly, pleasing, likeable, dependable."

Father Walter Heeney, O. S. B., recalls: "He was the most normal man I ever met. When it was time to study, he studied. When he had to play a game, he would always be on time. He played his game and left. He liked to read for he was a brilliant student. His classmates would gather in his room before philosophy class and ask for his help, since he knew Latin and Greek very well. He was witty in his own way, but there was nothing flashy

about him. He gave one the impression of a clean-cut fellow, around whom one would never tell a dirty joke or story.

"His main job was in the sacristy. One would find him working there, or in the chapel praying. It was his custom to make a visit before and after his work. He was always congenial and ready to help in any way.

"He was an exceptionally good student, who always knew the answers but never made a display of his knowledge. He was consistently on the honor roll. Emil was active in dramatics, in the Blessed Virgin Sodality, and in the Polyphonic Choir.

"His favorite sport was handball. He loved to walk, often hiking out to the grotto of our Blessed Mother, two miles from the Abbey. His devotion to Our Lady was exceptional."

Another says that what distinguished him was his naturalness, his power of remaining undistinguished. He was in no way an extremist.

His appearance at this time was attractive although he was slim, and a bit stoop-shouldered. He had fine blond hair.

To one schoolmate Emil confided that he wanted to be a martyr.

His brother Eugene has observed:

"Emil wanted to join the priesthood for as long as I can remember, and he always took his religious studies seriously. Yet he never argued to convince anyone of his own beliefs. Instead, he had a way of humorously suggesting their merits—an attitude that was not only more convincing but which made him well liked."

Evidently Emil perfected this approach through the years because he won his way into the hearts of all those whom he met, no matter what their religion. This was

particularly true of the effect he had in later years on his fellow POWs, who all acclaimed him a man's man as well as a true representative of his Catholic faith.

Father Bede Scholz, O. S. B., his spiritual director in those days, testifies that Seminarian Kapaun was at one time on the point of giving up his clerical studies. After hearing of these doubts, the priest urged him to go on. "His piety was so deep and yet so simple that I was convinced the little difficulties would not stand in the way of reaching his goal. His many duties as sacristan and head librarian, quietly performed, never kept him from praying a great deal in the chapel every day. This piety he had before he came. But he did develop a great love for the Mass. He continued this even when he returned for retreats as a priest during his military service.

"At one retreat he asked me to correct the ceremonies of his Mass, as he said they were most important and he might have become careless about them. As a student, he prepared for Mass by reading over the text the evening before. This he kept up as a priest, at least outside of his time in service. I do not know whether he was able to do this as a chaplain or not.

"He never refused his help in any capacity, no matter what the work might be. Always of a quiet disposition, he would enjoy being kidded about some of the things he had done wrong. During his student days I never thought of him as being a saint. His most extraordinary trait was his love for prayer."

Another teacher, Father Damian Cummins, O. S. B., records his first and deepest impression of Emil Kapaun in class and on the playground at Conception:

"It was an impression of a very great quietness in this boy turning man, of a depth that did not come readily to the surface, not because of any refusal to do so, but

simply because it was so deep, so far below the surface."

In the summer of 1937, Father Damian temporarily replaced Father Sklenar as pastor of Pilsen while the latter was on a trip to Europe. He recalls:

"During that summer a fellow seminarian, now Father Leroy Downs, came out from Kansas City to visit Emil for a few days. The two and myself took a walk around a 'country block' in search of conversation. Emil must have noticed that I was enjoying the summer for he asked me point-blank which I would rather be—a monk or a parish priest. I told him I liked it best 50-50. He then told of a fellow seminarian who, when just ready for ordination after three years in the seminary, left to become a Trappist in Kentucky because he feared the responsibilities of a parish priest.

"On Labor Day of that year I was to return to Conception Abbey and had on my hands to deliver as a present to one of our North Dakota missionaries, an ancient Ford car, minus license plates, and myself, minus a driver's license. I voiced my woes at the Kapaun farm. Emil's mother suggested that he could drive me home, even though it was out of his way for returning to Kenrick Seminary in St. Louis. Despite a recent rainfall, we went out of our way over a freshly gravelled road to Emporia. The going was miserable. Emil, who was driving, had not a word of complaint and so it was all the way. Good road or bad road made little difference to him."

During his six years at Conception, Emil returned home each summer to help with the farm work, especially the harvest. He always pitched in where the job was dirtiest and dustiest. Harvesting in hot, dry, Kansas June is stifling, choking labor.

A neighbor, Martin Klenda, noticed that young Kapaun was not wearing gloves. His hands were blistered and

raw. When asked why he worked with bare hands, he replied in a matter-of-fact tone:

"I want to feel some of the pain our Lord felt when He was nailed to the cross."



Harvest crew! Emil is kneeling in second row. Dad in middle of back row.

One noon the gang came in from the fields—tired, dirty, and famished. Mrs. Kapaun had prepared a table-

bending meal. There was no one to help serve. The self-forgetful son came to the rescue, carried the steaming plates from the stove to the table, and waited upon the diners until all were satisfied. Only then did he sit down to eat.

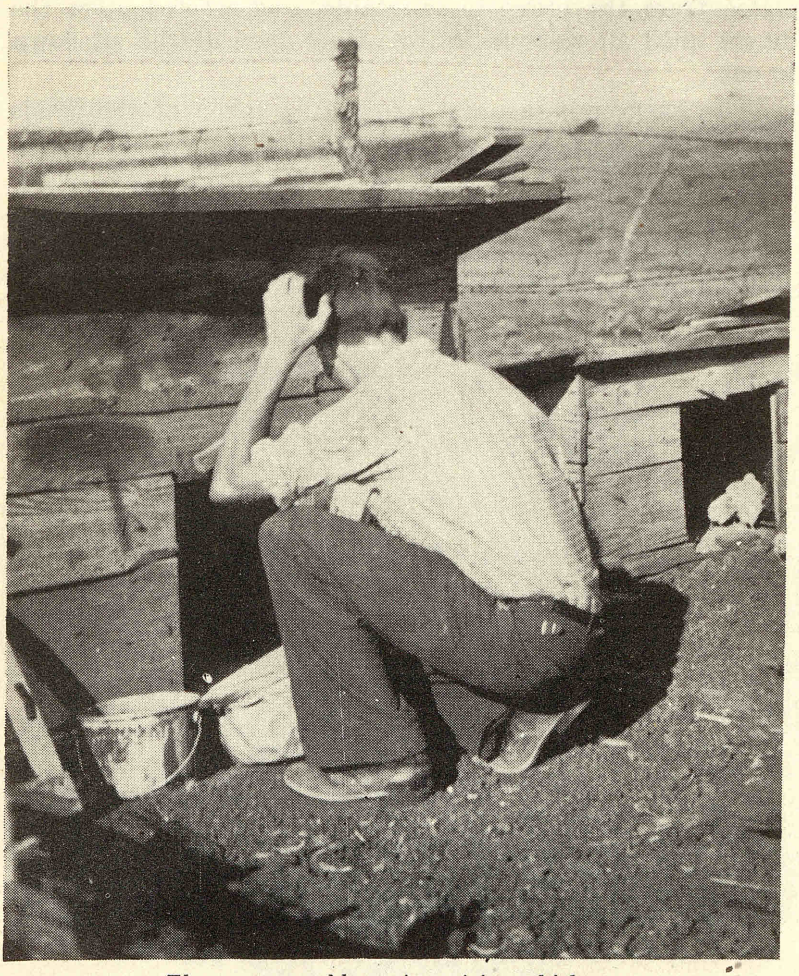
The back-breaking and exhausting labor of the fields was salted with humor, sometimes with horseplay and



Beside the old jallopy

practical jokes. The Kapauns had a hired man whose prize possession was a battered Model T Ford. One day young Kapaun shut off the gas line on the ancient jalopy. The hired man drove out of the yard to the main road. The car stalled. He cranked and cranked until his hands were blistered. Finally, Emil sauntered over and suggested that maybe he was not giving it enough gas!

Although his board and tuition were covered by scholarships, the young seminarian had to have a few extra dollars for travel and incidentals. To meet these expenses he



There are problems in raising chickens

raised chickens. His mother would start them off in the spring while he was away at school. To visitors she pointed them out as "Emil's chickens." At times there must have been problems in raising them as can be suspected from the accompanying snapshot.

No matter how busy the day promised to be, Emil went to Holy Mass and Holy Communion every morning and generally served at the altar in place of the boys assigned who were often irregular during vacation.

He was already attending Conception when his younger brother, Eugene, started in the first grade. They made up for the months of separation by full days of hunting, trapping and iceskating during the Christmas holidays.

"I remember," Eugene recalls, "when Emil mildly shocked one of his schoolgirl friends by wiring her seat to the ignition! He wasn't above playing a good joke, so long as it didn't really hurt anyone."

Eugene also remembers when he and his brother dammed up the creek near their farm to make a swimming hole.

"The water started backing up and Dad got pretty mad because he thought it would wash out our bridge. Emil finally convinced him no harm would come. But we were both worried for a while."

Emil's private spiritual life was a case of still waters running deep; he tried to keep his piety hidden. As a seminarian, of course, he followed the minimum practices of daily Mass and Communion, a visit to the Blessed Sacrament, saying the stations and reciting the Rosary in honor of Our Lady.

His love of our Blessed Mother was deep and heartfelt. Proof is offered in a little leaflet found in his prayer book. It has the well-worn edges and the thumbed pages which betray frequent use. Handwritten at the top are the words:

"To Emil Kapaun from Father Gregory."

The title of the leaflet: "THE PRACTICE OF THE THREE HAIL MARYS," in honor of the Power, Wisdom, and Mercy of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

PRACTICE: Recite, morning and evening, the Three Hail Marys in honor of these three great prerogatives, with this concluding invocation:

In the morning, "O my Mother, keep me from mortal sin during this day."

In the evening, "O my Mother, keep me from mortal sin during this night."

The signs of wear on the leaflet reveal that Emil Kapaun said this prayer frequently, if not daily.

A seminarian's life is a full one. Every hour of every day was planned at Conception, which is general in all Catholic seminaries.

The accompanying transcript of his studies and credits during seminary years shows the superb mind and diligent application of Emil Kapaun.

It also gives an idea of the curriculum in Catholic Seminaries and the course of studies pursued by all who prepare for the priesthood.

Kapaun's splendid record during his first four years at Conception gave ground for this recommendation from the college registrar to his bishop:

"I do not hesitate in recommending him as a suitable candidate for the priesthood. He has good talent as you can judge from his report, and his conduct on and off the campus has always been very commendable. His application to studies, too, has been of the best."

Emil completed his last two years of college work at Conception with special emphasis on philosophy. Up until the candidate for the altar enters upon the study of philosophy his work is considered preparatory. Following

that, two years of philosophy and four of theology are the minimum requirements for the priesthood.

Did Kapaun ever question his vocation? Did he ever wonder whether or not he was really called to be a priest of God? Like every student for the priesthood, at times he was beset with doubts and fears concerning his worthiness for so exacting a calling. Even as a seminarian, when friends mentioned that he might someday be a priest, he almost always answered: "Sometimes I think the sun will have to rise in the west before I could ever be a priest."

U. I. O. G. D.

Conception Seminary, Conception, Missouri

Certificate of Seminary Work

This Certifies that: ~~Emil Kaupan~~ Name — Address ~~Marion, Kansas~~

~~Sept. 6, 1930~~ Date Admitted — Course — ~~1930-35~~ Years Admitted — Degree — Year Taken

RECORD OF SEMINARY WORK

Year Work was done	Course No.	DESCRIPTIVE TITLE OF COURSE	Hours* Lec.	Hours* Lab.	Total Weeks Pursued	Grades 1st Sem.	Grades 2nd Sem.	Credits Sem. Hours	Credits Points
1932	Bl.28	Biology	3	2	36	95	95	8	
	Lt.84	Latin	1		36	92	90	2	
	Lt.85	Latin Poetry	3		36	94	95	6	
	Rl.11	Religion	2		36	90	92	0	
	En.41	English Comp.& Rhetoric	3		36	97	90	6	
	Pk.60	Public Speaking	1		36	95	96	2	
	Ms.11	Music	2		36	90	91	0	
	Gk.60	Greek I	4		36	95	97	8	
	Ls.11	Library Science	1		36	97	96	2	
		Conduct				99	99	0	
		Application to Study				99	99	0	
1933	Lt.85	Latin Poetry	1		36	90	90	2	
	Lt.86	Latin Grammar	3		36	95	97	6	
	Rl.12	Religion	2		36	94	95	0	
	En.42	English Literature	3		36	90	90	6	
	Gk.61	Greek Classics	3		36	98	95	6	
	Ph.210	Logic	4		18	97		4	
		Conduct				99	99	0	
	Ph.200	Criteriology	4		18		97	4	
1934	Ed.10	Economics	4		18	97		4	
	Hs.VII	Church History	4		18		90	4	
		Metaphysics-Ethics	6		36	95	98	12	
	Gr.80	German I	4		36	94	90	8	
		Introduction to the Bible	3		36	92	95	3	
1935		New Testament	2		36	90	90	4	
	Ed.58	Principles of Education	3		18	93		3	
	Sc.280	Sociology	3		18		94	3	
	Rl.IX	Church History	2		36	94	91	4	
		Cosmology	6		18	97		6	
	Ed.59	Educational Psychology	3		18		92	3	
		Psychology	6		18	97		6	
	Pn.240	American Government	3		18		91	3	

OVER

CERTIFICATE OF RECOMMENDATION

Name of High School *Conception College High School*

Location *Conception, Missouri*

Student's name in full *Kapaun Emil* Sex *Male*

Home Address *Marion, Kansas*

Birth Date *4-20-1916* Name of Parent *Mr. Enos Kapaun*

Entrance Date *Sept. 1, 1929* Was graduated *June 1932*

No. Weeks In School Year *36*

Passing Mark is *70* College Recommending Mark *75*

Length of Periods *50*

9th Grade			10th Grade		
Subject	Grade	Unit	Subject	Grade	Unit
Credits for I, II year of H. S. accepted from St. John's H. S. Pilsen, Kansas					
English I	*88*	*1*	*English*	*92*	*1*
American History	*80*	*1*	*Latin*	*96*	*1*
Algebra	*90*	*1*	*Gen. Science*	*97*	*1*
Biology	*95*	*1*	*Business Arithmetic*	*91*	*1*
11th Grade			12th Grade		
Conduct	*99*	*0*	*Conduct*	*99*	*0*
Application to Study	*99*	*0*	*Application to Study*	*99*	*0*
Religion	*92*	*0*	*Religion*	*98*	
English III	*93*	*1*	*English IV*	*94*	*1*
Latin III	*98*	*1*	*Latin IV*	*96*	
Physics	*95*	*1*	*History Med.*	*94*	*1*
History American	*92*	*1*	*History Mod.*	*95*	*1*
Biology	*95*	*1*			

Test Record (Please indicate if available)

Name of Test *Otis S. A. Test of Mental Ability, Form A*

A score of 49.

PERSONALITY RECORD (Confidential)

The information indicated below will be of assistance in evaluating the record of this student.

1. Initiative — Seldom initiates | Conforms | Varies with conditions | X Self-reliant | Actively Creative

2. Leadership — Passive | X Retiring but co-operative | Varying | Contributing | Strongly Controlling

3. Emotional Stability — Apathetic | Hyperemotional Unresponsive | Excitable | X Unusually well-balanced | Well-balanced | Exceptionally Stable

4. Definiteness of Purpose — Purposeless | Vacillating | Limited Purpose | X Purposeful

5. Concern for Others — Antisocial | Indifferent | Self-centered | Somewhat socially concerned | X Deeply and generally concerned

6. Reliability — Unreliable | Somewhat dependable | Usually dependable | X Conscientious | Assumes much responsibility

7. Industry — Seldom works even under pressure | Needs constant pressure | Needs occasional prodding | Prepares assigned work | X Seeks additional work

Significant school activities: *Editor of School News Paper, the Morning Star*
Member of Dramatic Club

Special interests or abilities: *Director of Press Club*
Assistant Librarian

Significant limitations (physical, social, mental):
Secretary of B. V. M. Sodality.
Football, with indifferent success; all intramural sports.

KENRICK SEMINARY
7800 KENRICK ROAD
SAINT LOUIS, MO.

Record of: *KAPAUN, Emil Joseph*

Matriculated in Theology: *11 Sept. 1936*

Home Address: *R. F. D. 4, Marion, Kansas*

Date of Birth: *20 April 1916* Place of Birth: *Marion, Kansas*

Graduated from:
Conception High School, Conception, Missouri — 1932
St. John's High School, Pilsen, Kansas — 1928-1930

Attended: *Conception College, Conception, Missouri — 1932-1936*
(Diocese: Wichita)

Entrance requirements from Conception College, Conception, Missouri.
(Former descriptive titles given in brackets.)

1936-1937 — First Semester			*Grade*	*Sem. Hrs.*
Theo	201	Apologetics (Theology, Dogma)	A	5
Theo	211	Moral Principles (Theology, moral)	B	5
Bib	203	Life of Christ (Sacred Scripture; Exegesis)	B-B	4
Litg	201	Special Intro. to the Liturgy (Liturgy)	C	1
Hist	201	The Christian Community in Medieval Times (Church History)	AA-A	4
Spch	203	Effective Speaking (Sacred Eloquence; Sacred Rhetoric; Ars Dicendi)	B-B B	3
Mus	201	Principles and Practice of Gregorian Chant (Gregorian Chant)	B	3
1936-1937 — Second Semester				
Theo	202	The Church (Theology, Dogma)	B	5
Theo	212	Morality of Acts (Theology, Moral)	C	5
Bib	204	Life of Christ (Sacred Scripture; Exegesis)	B-B	4
Litg	202	Special Intro. to the Liturgy (Liturgy)	B	1
Hist	202	Patristic History 50-397 A. D. (Patrology)	A-B	4
Spch	204	Effective Speaking (Sacred Eloquence; Sacred Rhetoric; Ars Dicendi)	B-B B	3
Mus	202	Principles and Practice of Gregorian Chant (Gregorian Chant)	B	3

1937-1938 — First Semester

Theo	203	God; The Trinity (Theology, Dogma)	C	5
Theo	213	Theological Virtues (Theology, Moral)	B	5
Bib	207	Pauline and Catholic Epistles (Sacred Scripture; Exegesis)	B-A	4
Law	201	Principles (Canon Law)	B	1
Litg		(Liturgy)	B	1
Hist	203	World History in the 15th-17th Centuries (Church History)	B-B	4
Spch	205	Speech Interpretation (Sacred Eloquence)	B	1
Mus	203	Rendition; Taste (Gregorian Chant)	A	3

1937-1938 — Second Semester

Theo	204	God and Creation; Incarnation and Redemption) (Theology, Dogma)	B	5
Theo	214	The Commandments (Theology, Moral)	A	5
Bib	208	The Acts of the Apostles (Sacred Scripture; Exegesis)	B-A	4
Law	202	Principles (Canon Law)	B	1
Litg		(Liturgy)	A	1
Hist	204	Patristic History 398-754 A. D. (Patrology)	B-B	4
Spch	206	Special Study for Selected Students (Sacred Eloquence)	B	1
Mus	204	Rendition; Taste (Gregorian Chant)	A	3

1938-1939 — First Semester

Theo	205	Grace and Justification (Theology, Dogma)	B	5
Theo	215	Social and Commutative Justice (Theology, Moral)	B	5
Bib	209	Historical Portions of the Old Testament (Sacred Scripture; Exegesis)	C-B	4
Law	203	Persons (Canon Law)	B	1
Litg	203	Divine Office (Liturgy)	B	1
Hist	205	Modern Problems of Church and State (Church History)	B	2
Spch	209	Sermon Composition (Homiletics; Sacred Eloquence)	B-B	2
Soc Sci		(General Advanced Survey of Sociology)	A	1
Mus	205	Selected Chants (Gregorian Chant)	B	2

1938-1939 — Second Semester

Theo	206	Mariology (Theology, Dogma)	B	5
Theo	216	States in Life (Theology, Moral)	B	5
Bib	210	Prophetic Portions of the Old Testament (Sacred Scripture; Exegesis)	A-A	4
Law	204	Persons (Canon Law)	B	1
Litg	204	Divine Office (Liturgy)	B	1
Hist	206	Modern Problems of Church and State (Church History)	B	2
Spch	210	Sermon Composition (Homiletics; Sacred Eloquence)	B-B	2
Soc Sci		(General Advanced Survey of Sociology)	B	1
Mus	206	Selected Chants (Gregorian Chant)	B	2

1939-1940 — First Semester

Theo	207	Sacramental Theology I (Sacramental Theology I)	A	5
Theo	217	Penance (Sacramental Theology II)	A	5
Theo	221	Pastoral Practice (Pastoral Theology)	A	1
Bib	205	The Psalms (Exegesis)	A	2
Law	205	Sacred Things (Canon Law)	A	1
Litg	205	Liturgy of the Sacraments (Liturgy)	A	2
Spch	207	Homiletics (Homiletics; Sacred Eloquence)	B-B	3
Educ	201	Special Methods in Teaching Religion (Catechetics)	A	2
Mus	211	Selected Choral Renditions (Gregorian Chant)	B	2

1939-1940 — Second Semester

Theo	208	Sacramental Theology II (Sacramental Theology I)	B	5
Theo	218	Matrimony (Sacramental Theology II)	B	5
Theo	222	Pastoral Practice (Pastoral Theology)	B	1
Bib	206	Scriptural Recapitulation (Exegesis)	B	2
Law	206	Canonical Procedure (Canon Law)	B	1
Litg	206	Liturgy of the Sacraments (Liturgy)	A	2
Spch	208	Homiletics (Homiletics; Sacred Eloquence)	B-B	3
Bkpg		(Ecclesiastical Bookkeeping)	A	2
Mus	212	Selected Choral Renditions (Gregorian Chant)	A	2

END OF COURSE — Ordained 9 June 1940

SYSTEM OF GRADING: AA — 96 to 100%; A — 90 to 95% B — 80 to 89%; C — 70 to 79%; D — 60 to 69% (Condition); E — Below 60% (Failure).

He honestly thought that the dignity and responsibilities of Christ's official representatives were too high for him. Here and there in his letters, even in those penned in a lighter vein, he expressed his high esteem for the honors to which he was called and in contrast his own profound unworthiness.

Once on a Saturday night, a time when farmers often congregate in town to shop and gossip, Emil was sitting with several friends on the steps of the Marion courthouse. To them he expressed his very serious doubts about his vocation. When they insisted on the immense amount of good he might do, his drooping spirits revived and he was greatly encouraged.

Further there was the formidable difficulty of finance, coupled with a desire to help his parents on the farm. For those were depression years. He could not have gone on without substantial assistance from several aunts, from Father Sklenar, and from his Bishop.

On September 11, 1936, he began the study of theology at Kenrick Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri. A classmate and close friend, Father Vesecky, recollects:

"He was loved by everyone, young and old, and he loved all people.

"His studies always came before recreation or sport. But he was always devout and had a warm smile for everyone.

"When permitted, he would go fishing in the little lake on the seminary grounds. What fish he caught he gave to the Sisters in the kitchen. A memorable characteristic of his manner of speaking was the constant usage of the word 'peoples' instead of people."

A man's character is revealed in his letters to intimate friends. Kapaun's closest friend was Emil Melcher, his cousin, who lived with the Kapauns for two years while

both went to high school in Pilsen. They were inseparable. Everything was shared—work and play, joys and sorrows, successes and failures. When separated, the letters they exchanged regularly, give the reader an insight into the heart of a seminarian and into the hearts of two youths who were every inch boys. Following are some of the letters which the young seminarian wrote during the time immediately preceding his ordination.

Kenrick Seminary
February 1, 1938

"Dear Emilio,

"Well, here comes some more of the old stuff. Roll up your pants legs and put on your boots—she's going to be deep.

"How are you? I'm feelin' like a million dollars in 1934. Sorry I didn't write sooner—but I was pressed for time; the exams had me by the neck and just about strangled me. But somehow I slipped thru the 'half-nelson' and won by a decision. I think I won all the rounds. We had a 9-round fight, i.e., 9 big husky exams to pin down.

"I'm awful late with this, but I want to thank you for that Christmas present. Since you gave me a traveling kit, you must think I am on the road too much. It's hard telling when I will be traveling again (maybe soon, but I hope not).

"How are the old country, the people, weddings, funerals, and entertainments? Did Pete Rudolph have a big crowd at his hook-up? I haven't heard any news from Pilsen, but I don't imagine you are having trouble with floods like they are out East and North. Reports say Kansas is dry, i.e., 'in need of rain'. We had a nice rain here Saturday night.

"We had a little tough luck here at the Seminary. One of the fellows got appendicitis. They could not remove



Kapaun, 23, and a fellow seminarian

the appendix because of some kind of poisoning, which caused his death. They brought the body out here over Saturday night and Sunday morning before they took it to his home in Peoria, Illinois. He was a swell fellow. Had only four months to go to be ordained a priest. That really put the clamps on the students. The fellows felt very bad, seeing their pal and classmate lying there in the coffin, dead! Something like that makes a fellow realize that he is going to die, probably at the time that he least expects it. We should always be ready to die.

"Well, Emil, before the Japanese try to pull us into war, I guess I better close. Spring is coming and summer is way off yet, but the groundhog is coming out tomorrow to try to see the sun here at St. Louis through the big cloud of smoke—then he'll stay out and freeze for six weeks. Don't forget to spiel when the news gets thick and gullible. Keep up the fight and I will, too.

Yours with love,
Joe G———h"

Note: Those dashes represent the name of "Joe Greenslough." The two Emils called each other "Joe" and "Mike" interchangeably.

February 17, 1938
Kenrick Seminary

"Dear Emil,

"Congratulations!! I am really glad to hear the news. Yessir, Emil, you are taking a step onward—for life, as you mentioned—but in that step I hope you will find happiness. Since God has called you to the married life, He is expecting you to do your duty and save your soul. After all, that is what He put us on this world for. But you know all this, I suppose, from those 'good Bohemian instructions' Father gave you. I bet you had a tough time with them. That gives you an idea of how my exams were

(and why I am glad when they are over).

"Emil, I got your letter on Monday, the 14th, and ever since then I have been thinking—from now on I will have to write Mr. and Mrs. Emil Melcher. I know good and well you would like to have me there for the big celebration; and considering how we used to face our troubles together and how we used to work together, it makes me feel—well, as if I was not doing my part by not being there. Emil, I hope you understand—don't think that I am 'going down' on you. I will be there as much as I can. On the 21st, I'll offer up Holy Mass and Holy Communion, a rosary, the stations, and some other prayers, for your successful married life. Everyone needs them for a successful and happy marriage. And from 10 till about 11 that morning I'll be thinking about you and what is happening!! And here is the greatest luck to you, Emil, that you may get through the ceremonies, etc., O. K. And what I say for you goes for 'Vicky' too. After you get settled down, you've got to write me about it—and if you don't give me one of your wedding pictures, I'll clean up on you later!

"Well, so long, Emil; I hope I have explained myself. Surely you understand —.

Yours for success,
Emil (Mike Greenslough)"

February 21, 1938
Kenrick Seminary

"Dear *Mr.* and *Mrs.* E. Melcher

"Hello there—strangers!! Are you still alive?? I am wondering how your celebration is progressing.

"Thanks for the invitation. Sorry I couldn't come—but I'll invite you to my wedding and then you can get even with me.

"I heard Kansas was covered with snow. If that's so, then you had a nice snowy wedding.

"Probably this letter will not catch you before you leave for your honeymoon. Where are you going? To Florida, California, or Wyoming?

"How did the drinks and grub hold out? I'll be expecting a letter from you in about a month. By then you should be back from your honeymoon.

"I'm sending a little remembrance for your wedding. When I asked Father to bless the crucifix, he asked me what I was going to do with it. I told him to whom I was sending it, and he said:

" 'Good, tell them to hang it up in their living room where everybody will see it. And tell them to say some prayers together before the crucifix either in the morning or evening. If they continue this practice, God will bless their home and their work as Christ promised: "For where there are two or three gathered in My name, there am I in the midst of them." I wish them a very happy and fruitful life.'

"Be sure to send me your *new* address.

As ever,
Joe G. (Alias — Emil)"

Kenrick Seminary
October 10, 1938

"Dear Emil and Vicky,

"Well, just to show you that I am still percolating, here goes a struggle with my old typewriter. And what a struggle!

"How are you making it? Happy, I hope, with plenty to eat and an exciting election. If you send me a ballot, I'll vote for you. I suppose you've got your wheat sown

by now. I did not hear from any of the old Pilseners so I am a stranger when it comes to knowing what is going on.

"It looks like Czechoslovakia is having her troubles. Hitler seems to be getting his 'share of the cake' and he takes it without anybody doing anything about it. Just so that war spirit doesn't get over here.

"Did you pay any attention to the Big Series? I listened to the 4th game yesterday and I was disgusted with the Cubs.

"Maybe you are not much interested in sports any more, but still they furnish some pretty interesting entertainment. We have been playing some football—only touch variety. It is a lot of fun. We have softball, hard-baseball, etc. I even shot a few rounds of golf. Made 9 holes in 47 strokes. Not bad for an old farmer. It feels good to knock that old ball about a quarter of a mile—but it is not so good if you lose track of it. That's the bad part about golf."

"Pretty soon you will be husking corn again. Then you'll get that wrist of yours limbered up and that back strained from scooping thousands of bushels of corn into your crib. If you are still husking at Christmas time, I'll come out and help you.

As ever from
bashful Joe Greenslough"

Kenrick Seminary
February 19, 1939

"Dear Emil and Vicky,

"Congratulations on your wedding anniversary!! By now you know what kind of joys, trials, and sorrows married life brings. I wish you the best of luck and a

great abundance of joy, both during this short period of earth and during the never-ending life in heaven.

"Well, how are you? I'm still all here—happy, with bright days ahead; plenty to do, plenty of good old fun, and not too much to worry about.

"It looks like things are happening pretty fast. I am afraid that our government is going to be involved in another bloody struggle.

"I suppose you read about Pope Pius's death. The Church, in fact, the whole world, lost a great leader and a great advocate of world peace. I wonder who will be the next Pope and what name he will take. The last Pope, Pius X died in 1914; and in a few months the bombs were bursting and men were being mowed down like rats on the fields of France. At that time America was told that she was fighting 'to make the world safe for democracy', whereas what we were fooled into fighting for was to lick Germany so England could hold her vast territories and get a little more.

"I'll remember you in my prayers. Please pray for me, too, for I need it very much.

As ever,
Emil"

St. Louis, Missouri
April 5, 1939

"Dear Emil and Vicky,

"I just received your letter this noon so I am going to answer it right away.

"Hitler seems to be getting a raking over the coals lately. England and France would like to rope in America again so that Americans would generously do the fighting for them at our expense in lives and money—and then England and France would nicely rake in some more

territory as they did in the last world war. The real danger to us Americans is Russia. The newspapers picture one side of the question. The other they leave. We found that out during the recent war in Spain. Franco was called a 'rebel', dangerous and destructive. His moves were always pictured in a bad light. But now we are beginning to understand that we were not told the whole story. The sad part of it is that some Americans went over there to fight for the Communists against the Christians, and they were practically wiped out. I wonder when the Americans will learn not to fall for all the propaganda. Oh shucks—I should not be writing stuff like this.

Your old cousin as ever,
Emil"

"P. S. Say a little prayer for me as I really need it. Lent didn't get me down this time. I think I put on weight even while fasting—by gingoes. I better fast longer. Be good! I was going to put in a $5.00 bill as a present to you but I got the letter sealed before I remembered—Yours as ever."

Kenrick Seminary
April 14, 1940

"Dear Emil and Vicky,

Man alive!! I sure got behind on this one. Yes sir—I just didn't get around to writing, what with a lot of studying to do and a lot of writing to get things set for the 'Big Day' and going into the city getting things lined up.

"What are you doing June 9? Will you be able to come down to Wichita to see me and four other young men ordained to the Priesthood? The Ordination will be at St. John's Chapel. We were there on that high school trip. The chapel is large. If there is not room enough,

I am sure you can squeeze yourself in with Vicky leading the way. I will be looking for you there eight weeks from today. You know, Emil and Vicky, I feel like the dickens. Maybe you do not realize fully what it means to be a priest,



Kenrick Seminary, left to right: Msgr. I. J. Strecker, Father Kapaun, Father John Vesecky, Father A. J. Preisner, Father George Schmidt, Father Michael Lies

but I tell you—after I have studied all these years, I am more convinced that a man must be a living saint to dare to take that step. And that is where my worries come in. Gee whiz, I have a feeling that I am far, far from being

a saint worthy to receive the Priesthood. Think what it means!! To offer up the Living Body and Blood of Our Saviour every day in Holy Mass—to absolve souls from sin in Holy Confession and snatch them from the gates of hell. These and a hundred more duties and responsibilities make a person realize that the vocation to the priesthood is so sublime that the angels in heaven were not given the honor, no, not even the Blessed Mother who was never stained with sin—even she was not called to be a priest of God—and here I am called! I hope you will be at the Ordination.

Yours sincerely in Christ,
Emil"

For three weeks during August, 1939, when Emil Kapaun and John Vesecky were subdeacons, they assisted Father Thomas Green in street-preaching at Caldwell, Kansas, whose Catholic congregation was about 70 per cent Bohemian. All of them, particularly the fallen-aways, took an excited interest in Emil Kapaun's Bohemian instructions.

"The people just loved him," states Father Green. "They flocked around him so as not to miss one word!"

Emil always dried the dishes after the meal. When they came back in the evening from the towns where they had spoken, the two young theologians would raid the icebox for left-over fried chicken.

His parents recall with singular pride the first sermon their son preached in his own parish. It was Christmas, 1939. Deacon Kapaun, home for the holidays, received permission to preach at the Midnight Mass.

Picture the delight of the congregation, the swelled chests of relatives, the thrill for Father Sklenar, when this son of the parish began to speak fluently and eloquently

in Bohemian. His dear mother's eyes sparkle today when she recalls that night. She even repeats some of the gestures he made and some of the points he emphasized. She smiles when relating how some of the relatives leaned over to her and asked:

"Is that really Emil up there?"



Mother and Son

When young Kapaun finished his sermon, Father Sklenar, who was not given to demonstrating emotion, hurried over to the Communion rail, patted the youthful orator on the back, beaming with paternal delight.

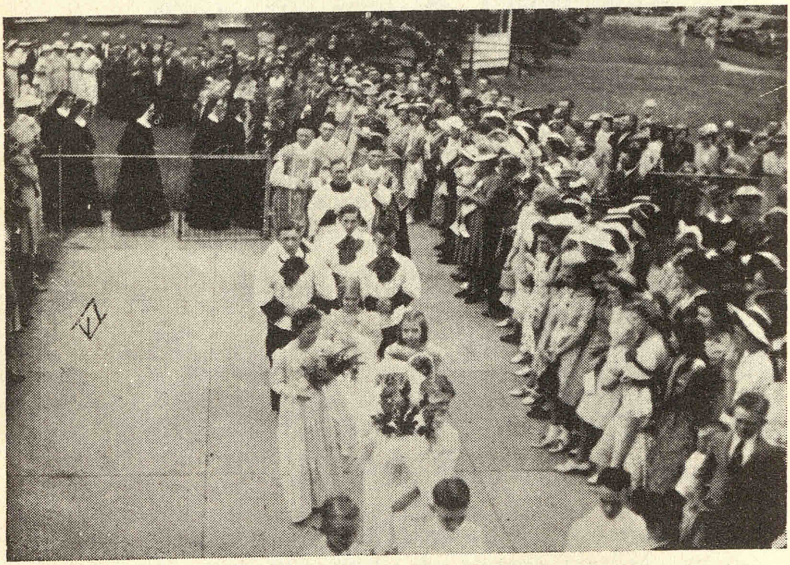
From the day of his ordination, June 9, 1940, by Bishop Winkelmann at St. John's Chapel in Wichita, Father Sklenar would not permit him to read a private Mass, until after his First Solemn Mass, June 20. This was a real trial for the young priest who found it difficult to wait.

The ribbon used to bind his hands together during ordination was hand-painted. Father Kapaun wanted to have it cut up into souvenirs for his friends, but he was dissuaded because it was so beautiful. Ordinarily the ordination ribbon is a precious personal keepsake but, characteristically, Father wished to share this treasure with his friends.

CHAPTER THREE

THOU ART A PRIEST FOREVER

Father Kapaun's many friends were remembered at his First Solemn High Mass celebrated in his home parish on Thursday, June 20, 1940. At 9:30 A. M., a long procession started from the rectory to the church, led by



Entering church for First Mass

Eugene Kapaun, brother of the celebrant, and two acolytes with torches. Then came fourteen priests, thirty-two flower girls, members of the Knights of St. George and the Catholic Workmen Societies, five pages, two brides

of honor, the bride, her veil bearer, four Mass servers, subdeacon, deacon, archpriest, and lastly, the celebrant. The two marching bands of Pilsen escorted the procession to and from the church.



Rear center, coming from First Mass

After Mass, the celebrant and his classmates, Father Preisner and Father Vesecky, gave their priestly blessing to the entire congregation.

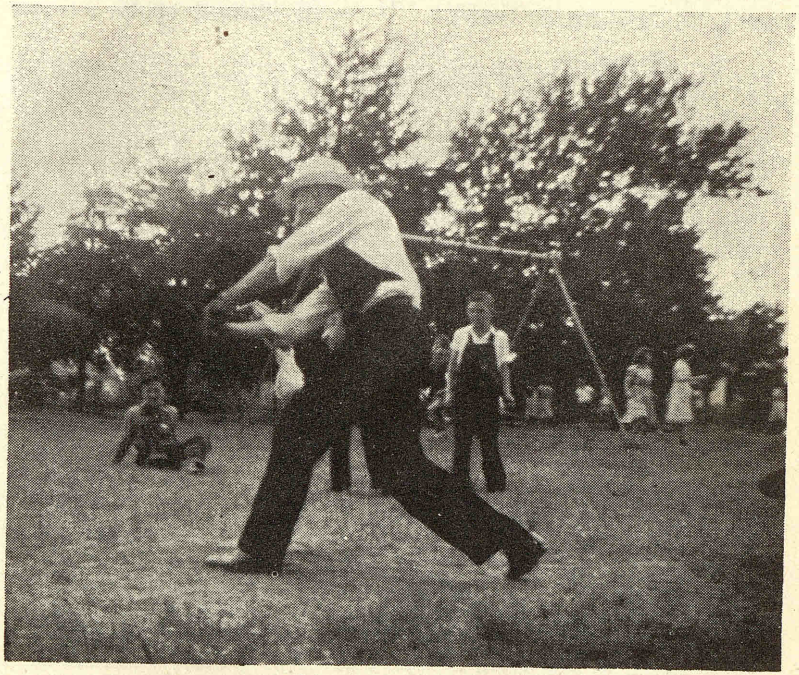
A banquet was served at noon and in the evening to more than 1,200 guests. In the evening, the parish presented a short program in honor of its first priest.

Ten days later the newly ordained was appointed assistant in his home parish. The aging pastor needed a helper who could speak Bohemian.



Blessing the people after his First Mass

The kind, capable, and energetic assistant threw himself into the spiritual, social, and material activities of the parish. He worked particularly with the children and youth. Every recess, when he was not occupied with other duties, he was out on the playground. The little ones adored him. A camera fan caught Father hitting a



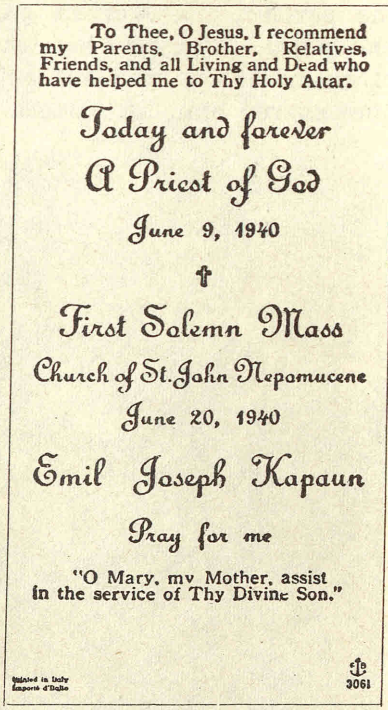
The assistant pastor clouting a home run

home run. Notice the Roman collar and rabbi. Father wore it at all times in humble deference to the wishes of Father Sklenar, who was a stickler for his own version of clerical decorum; he still dubs as a "cowboy priest" any Catholic clergyman who appears anywhere without

his Roman collar. Father Kapaun even painted the inside of the schoolhouse with his rabbi on!

He did a tremendous amount of manual labor in the yard, mowing around the buildings and in the cemetery, cleaning up rubbish and trimming trees.

One afternoon the energetic assistant was filling in a low spot between the church and the rectory. The wheelbarrow was a creaky affair with a steel-rimmed wheel. Crunching noisily over the stones and sidewalk, it disturbed the siesta of the aged pastor, who was never slow to express his likes and dislikes.


To Thee, O Jesus, I recommend my Parents, Brother, Relatives, Friends, and all Living and Dead who have helped me to Thy Holy Altar.

Today and forever
A Priest of God

June 9, 1940

†

First Solemn Mass
Church of St. John Nepomucene
June 20, 1940

Emil Joseph Kapaun

Pray for me

"O Mary, my Mother, assist in the service of Thy Divine Son."

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Imprimé d'Italie

3061

First Mass Card

After a few moments of deliberation, Father Emil hurried across the street, asked George Vinduska for an old bicycle tire, cut it the proper length, wired it around the noisy steel rim, and continued his labors — quietly enough to permit the pastor to get his rest.

After one year as assistant, he typed out several interesting pages entitled: PRACTICES AND CUSTOMS AT ST. JOHN NEPOMUCENE PARISH, PILSEN, KANSAS. This compilation combines the ideas of a diary of the Church year with his own personal observations. A few excerpts give some idea of Father Kapaun's duties.

"May 16: Feast of St. John Nepomucene, Patron Saint of the Parish, was celebrated on that day. Both bands escorted the Fathers from the rectory to the church, in a procession of the Katolicky Delniky (Catholic Workmen), and the Sv. Jiri (St. George) Societies. Between Mass and Benediction, the Litany of St. John is said, led by the celebrant and answered by the choir and people. Benediction. Procession back to the rectory."



One of the two marching bands at Pilsen. Parish hall in background.

"December 7, 1941, vigil of Immaculate Conception. Japan declared war on the United States. As I listened to the Catholic Evidence Hour from Salina, I was shocked to hear the program interrupted by a special announcement of war hostilities."

"December 8. Feast of the Immaculate Conception.



Assistant pastor of Pilsen

The people were greatly disturbed over the war. At noon today Congress declared war on Japan. Such a way to honor the Patroness of our country."

September 12: Grandma Vinduska died. Monsignor tolls the small bell, first in the rolling toll, then a pause, then about seven distinct tolls, a pause, then a rolling toll, pause, distinct tolls, etc., about four or five times."

"November 2: All Souls Day. I said all three Masses at the side altar, and the pastor had High Mass at 9. No sermon. After blessing of the catafalque, we went to the cemetery. At the cross, Monsignar led the Litany for the Poor Souls in Bohemian."

In this style, Father Kapaun kept a record of the entire Church year. A few of the customs were carry-overs from Bohemia; others were adaptations of old-world practices.

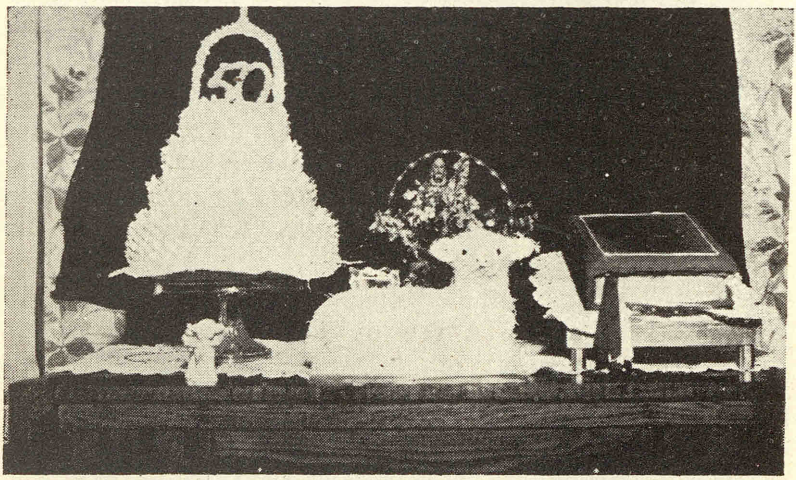
On June 21, 1941, Father Sklenar celebrated fifty years as a priest and thirty-eight years as pastor of Pilsen. The assistant directed preparations for the grand occasion. Into the GOLDEN JUBILEE BOOKLET of forty-four pages, Father Emil put many weeks of research and writing. It is a veritable mine of information about the early days of Pilsen and the parish setup.

At the suggestion of Father Kapaun, Mrs. William Rudolph, a pleasant, friendly woman and a superbly efficient cook, baked several cakes representing the sacred vessels and symbols of Holy Mass—a chalice, a lamb, a sheaf of wheat, a bunch of grapes, and a missal. The Mass book appeared so real that a visiting priest walked up to it as it rested on a table and tried to open it. Father Kapaun was in high glee at the surprise of the padre and commented with a chuckle:

"I just knew some priest would do that!"

The MARION RECORD-REVIEW carried a full front-

page acount of the career of Father Sklenar, written by his assistant. Three months later, September 28, 1941, the elderly pastor received the honored title of Monsignor.



All made of cake

Father Kapaun had his first taste of military service when he was appointed auxiliary chaplain at the army air base in Herington, Kansas, sixteen miles north. He performed this service from January 5, 1943, until July 12, 1944, with only a month intermission—in March of 1944—when his work was temporarily interrupted by an operation.

On April 26, 1943, he gave his first official indication of an attraction to the armed service, in a letter to Bishop Winkelmann:

"I am sending you a copy of the report which I already have sent to the Military Ordinariate.

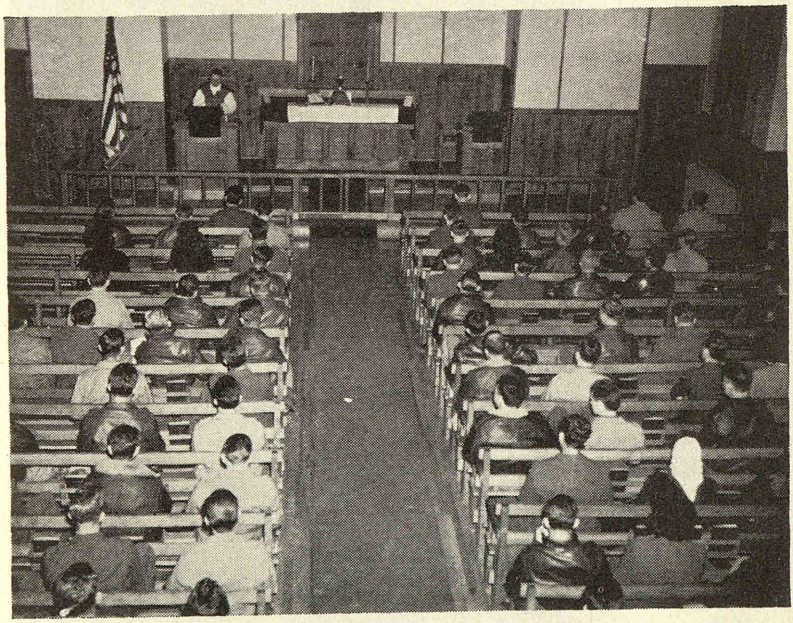
"So far I am saying Holy Mass at the Base every Sunday. I enjoy the work with the men very much. I

visit them in the hospital. They certainly are glad to see a Catholic priest.

"I brought some Catholic magazines to read, among them our Advance Register, and am making arrangements to bring them the Sunday Visitor for their reading room.

"In short, dear Bishop, I love that work."

Every Sunday about mid-afternoon, Father and Albert



Preaching at Herington, Kansas, Air Base

Stika, the present postmaster, would start out with Albert driving and Father reading his Breviary. Along the way they picked up servicemen, especially as they approached the Base. The first Mass Father offered at Herington was on April 11, 1943, in a recreation room reeking with

tobacco smoke and decorated with cigarette and cigar butts, burnt matches and ashes. A more devotional setting was provided later. After the Mass at 5 P. M., they drove home, eating on the way the lunch provided



Attention!

by the good Sisters at Pilsen. Father also said Mass at the Base on Monday and Tuesday. On every trip he visited the jail and the hospital.

He carried on a faithful correspondence with the boys of the parish who were in service. His letters were lengthy



At ease!

and newsy, spiced with humor and warm with affection. To Gerald Franta, Air Corps, Father wrote October 19, 1942:

"How are you by this time? From what your mother told me and the snapshot of you and your pal, you must be getting along pretty well. We are surely glad to hear that. And I suppose they are keeping you pretty busy. Where would you rather be, in the Air Corps or at home? (Please excuse the typing mistakes.) By typing letters to you boys, I can make a little headway. This is number five tonight. If I wrote all of them in longhand, I soon would have to carry my arm in a sling."

A letter of November 30, 1942, has this paragraph:

"You mentioned that I should keep the cold winds over here in Kansas. But I surely had my hands full lately. I could not control it all. The wind was coming from Texas, a sort of 'hot wind'. I guess you fellows began to whoop it up or something, and the hot wind just naturally began to spread around.

"When you get to feeling blue or things don't go so well, just think of your friends on the 'home front' who are praying for you. Every week a holy Mass is said for you and your folks. May God bring you back again healthy and safe and victorious. Write again!

From a soldier of Christ,
Father Emil Kapaun"

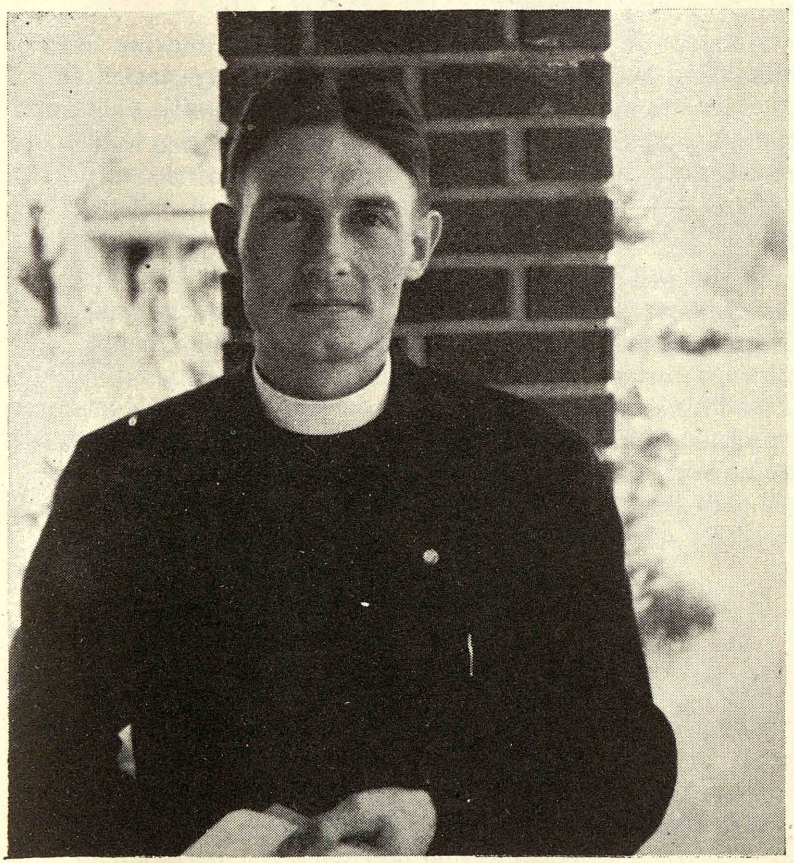
March 30, 1943, Father wrote:

"We have fellows scattered all over. The last boys drafted from Pilsen are my brother Eugene and Leonard Lentz. Eugene is in a tank division, presently in the desert of California. He writes that it is a tough place. If the army wants more men, I guess some more Pilseners will have to go. They called recently for 4,000 chaplains. Looks like we young priests will get a chance for some army action.

"During the winter I did you a favor by keeping the

cold up here, so now you do me a favor and keep that strong wind in Texas."

Every energy and talent was devoted to the good of souls. A convert recently remarked:



Pastor of Pilsen

"I joined the Church mainly because of Father Kapaun. He was so good and kind, and he explained things so clearly."

Instructing the little ones and joining in their games, long periods in the confessional, endless attendance at meetings, visiting the sick and the aged in addition to his vigorous personal spiritual life occupied the official hours of the young assistant.

Many an additional hour he spent mowing lawns, trimming trees and tidying up the ten-acre parish tract. By private prayer and penance, together with visits and personal appeals, he tried to get some of the wandering sheep back to the fold. Whenever anyone remarked that he had done something special in the way of self-sacrifice and self-forgetfulness, he answered in his slow drawl:

"Oh, that is nothing. Anybody would have done that."

He was particularly eager to carry out the wishes of Father Sklenar. After three years of this humble and obedient assistance, he was appointed, September 16, 1943, as administrator of St. John's, effective when Monsignor resigned. On November 2, the pastor did relinquish the reins and retired to Marion, Kansas.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

Father Kapaun took his added responsibility seriously. That he had won his way into the hearts of the people in his home parish is attested by a petition sent to Bishop Winkelmann, November 7, 1943:

"We the undersigned committee of the St. John Nepomucene Church in Pilsen humbly petition your Excellency for this favor: We would greatly appreciate and consider it a favor if your Excellency would leave Rev. E. J. Kapaun, our present administrator, as a permanent pastor of our parish unless your Excellency has already made a different assignment. There are peculiar circumstances and needs of our community which require proper handling of our people. We consider this appointment would redound to our parish's good and to the service of the whole diocese. In the name and wish of our parish membership we have undertaken this step.

"We assure your Excellency of our filial respect and obedience to whatever your decision may me.

Signed Adolph Holub — Joseph Steiner
Alphonse E. Bosh
George Vinduska
Church Committee

A pet desire of the young pastor was to interest everyone in the Bible. To that end he organized a study group. At Christmas of 1943 he gave every boy and girl in the Pilsen school a copy of the New Testament.

A parishioner recollects:

"He was always trying to increase interest in the Church, especially on the part of the younger folks. When he was at Pilsen, I remember he organized a young people's club, and he was never too busy to fill in when the kids were playing baseball. Emil liked—and wanted to help—all people, regardless of their religious persuasion. This kindness helped make him the hero he was."



Shepherd of Pilsen with some of his lambs

His sermons were to the point, with a ring of sincerity. Frequently he used the expression 'for example'; then he would offer some homey, down-to-earth illustration of what he was explaining. He tried to instill in the heart of every parishioner the spark of sanctity that burned in his own.

On the surface everything seemed to be going smoothly, but the heart of the shepherd was heavy. He bares his soul in a letter of June 8, 1944:

"Most Reverend and dear Bishop,

"I am writing to you for the sake of clearing my

conscience. When I received my first appointment as assistant in my home parish, I realized the situation would be very delicate. I understood you to remark that you were making me pastor of Pilsen, my home parish. Since then, my conscience has been bothering me because, in regard to the salvation of souls, several things should be considered.

As assistant, I was determined to do my work solely for Christ. I showed no favoritism to anyone. In fact, I treated my relatives and friends coldly (with no special affection). Some people seemed to be scandalized at that, but I am sure all of them realized I was trying to be a good priest to all. The people told me that they do not want me to go, but I assured them that the Bishop knows what is best and that the will of God is expressed through his decision. The people know that. And if they get a good, holy priest, they will be as attached to him in a short time as they have become attached to me. This part does not worry me, but the following fact does.

"I was raised in this parish. There are people here, relatives and friends, who are superior to me (in age, in school, etc.). Some find it difficult to look up to me as their spiritual superior. They do not say anything, but from the way they act and the way they perform their spiritual obligations, I know they find me a great moral obstacle. If they had a 'strange' Bohemian priest, that obstacle would no longer exist.

"The people here at Pilsen must have a priest who can hear confessions in Bohemian. He must also give sermons occasionally in this language of the majority, although most understand English.

"Those who want to keep me here are the good, faithful members. If they received another good priest who works with them in their language, they will be as faithful and zealous under him as they were under good Monsignor

Sklenar and me; and the other people, those who find me to be a moral obstacle, will be assured that with a 'strange' priest they will not have that trouble. I am sure you realize what I mean.

"It is in consideration of these people who will not complain or say anything but who really need a 'strange' Bohemian priest that I am writing this letter. My conscience tells me to do it because their souls are at stake. Some of those people feel that I still remember and hold against them things they did in former years. I could tell them a hundred times that all is forgotten—yet they will not be assured but will hold back and be afraid. That is the human element, and it creates a serious moral obstacle. To remove it, I try to be humble and kind as possible. Your Excellency, I am sure you understand that I am most anxious someone be given them who can be, as St. Paul described it, 'All things to *all* men.'

"When I was ordained, I was determined to 'spend myself' for God. I was determined to do that cheerfully, no matter in what circumstances I would be placed or how hard a life I would be asked to lead. This is why I volunteered for the Army and that is why today I would a thousand times rather be working, deprived of all ordinary comforts, being a true 'Father' to all my people, than be living in a nice, comfortable place but with my conscience telling me that I am an obstacle to many.

"I had wished to mention this to you a long time ago. But I trust this is not too late and that now my conscience will be at peace in this regard.

"Wishing you God's blessing and trusting in your kind benevolence toward Pilsen Parish, I remain

Your Excellency's humble Servant,
Rev. Emil Kapaun"

A week later Bishop Winkelmann recommended him

for an Army Chaplaincy, and on July 12, 1944, relieved him of the pastorate at Pilsen and the Auxiliary Chaplaincy at Herington. His successor was a classmate and bosom friend, Father John Vesecky, who tells of that time:

"When I was appointed to succeed him at Pilsen, he stayed with us for several weeks until he left for military service. I gave him a key to the rectory, and he came and went as he wished. He was a most generous guest. Never once that I can remember did he ever come without bringing something—food, candy, etc."

His last communication on his way to Chaplain's Training School was this postcard from Chicago—dated August 24, 1944:

"Dear Dad and Mother: Our train was one hour and 45 minutes late. Mr. Supena met me. This morning I offered Mass in the Bohemian Church of Blessed Agnes. It seems everyone is Bohemian in this part of Chicago. I will write more later. Emil"

CHAPTER FIVE

SOLDIERING FOR GOD

Would there were space for all the correspondence Father Kapaun sent and received during his military service! It is inspiring. Two striking facts stand out. Father was regular in sending to his bishop a copy of his monthly report together with a letter. Both Bishop Winkelmann and Bishop Carroll answered every single letter and report which Father sent in.

From Chaplains' School, Fort Devens, Massachusetts, Father wrote, September 2, 1944:

"Most Reverend and dear Bishop,

"I wish to express my sincerest thanks for the Mass Kit forwarded to me through the Chaplain Aid Association as a donation from you and the 'Faithful of the Diocese of Wichita.'

"There are nearly 40 Catholic priests in a class of 145. Holy Mass is my greatest consolation. We priests offer Mass together in a special building. We have Rosary in common in the morning. We must find time to say our office privately.

"I am very happy. Classes are interesting and practical. And might I add that the drills and marches give a person a tremendous appetite.

"In appreciation to Chaplains' Aid, I am sending them a check of $150.00. Without help, the Association would not be able to do its wonderful work.

"Again I thank you for your kindness, and I hope to pay you a visit after graduation."

Here is part of Bishop Winkelmann's reply:

"I am sure that the Chaplains' Aid was surprised when you, in turn, sent them a munificent donation of $150 to promote their work. This gesture on your part reveals your noble character and disposition. I am sure that God will abundantly bless you and that your work will be most successful, no matter where your assignment."

Fort Devens, Massachusetts
September 8, 1944

"Dear Dad and Mother:

"I have a few minutes to spare but next week I will not have any time. So I want to wish you, Dad, a Happy Birthday. Maybe you feel a little lonesome since our family is spread far and wide, yet I bet you feel very glad to know that really we are all very close together, much closer than many people who are living together in the same house. For that we can be thankful to God, and I hope He blesses you and keeps you cheerful as you have been in the past.

"Army life does a person a lot of good. When I took my physical exam, I was one pound overweight for a perfect score. Now my good record is all broken to pieces. I am five pounds overweight. My feet are toughened to stand a 30-mile march. We get in at least 15 or more miles a day. In the evening I feel as fresh as a young calf. Cannot figure it out. A mile walk is like a short stroll.

"German prisoners are cooking for us and they really put out good meals. The water here is slightly chemicalized. It tastes awful, but I solved that problem. I light a cigar and take a smoke so I cannot taste anything. In the army we have to figure out all kinds of things.

"You will not get any letters from me for a while. Maybe a card or two. I am sending you a present in part



"I am very happy."

appreciation of what you have done for me. I got a check today for $250.00. The check is a birthday present to you, Dad."

On September 10, he wrote to Gerald Franta:

"Here at Chaplains' School I am like a bug in a rug. We are strapped down to a rigorous routine of classes and we drill like master troopers. Soon we will be crawling through the infiltration course, under machine gun fire, etc. We have a few fat fellows here and I don't see how they will squeeze under the bullets. They are fairly worried."

On October 4, 1944, he graduated from Chaplain' School and was assigned to Camp Wheeler, Georgia. He wrote to his Bishop:

"The chaplain situation is critical. We have some 19,000 soldiers not counting the families of the officers, the WACs, and the civilian personnel. And for that bunch we have only two Catholic chaplains. . . . Last Sunday I said Mass in the theatre on the stage at 8:30 and 9:30. The chapels are too small to hold the crowds. At 11:30 I went out to the bivouac area, took the Blessed Sacrament with me, heard confessions, and distributed Holy Communion to men who had been fasting from midnight to 12:30. We recited the Rosary together. I read the Gospel and gave a short exhortation. How I wished I could have said Mass for them, but I had already said three Masses.

"I have a lot of things to learn about army life. But with the strain of it all comes the consolation of doing some little good for men who are willing and worthy."

The Chaplain's Corner of the newspaper "SPOKE", published for the officers and enlisted men of Camp Wheeler, issue of January 25, 1945, carried a sermon by Chaplain Kapaun, entitled:

"THE CHAPLAIN AND PERSONAL OPINION"

"A chaplain in the U. S. Army does many things in his line of duty. He gives his time, his strength, his patience, to encourage soldiers to fulfill their duties to Almighty God. He provides the means and the opportunity for men to worship God. In this, he stands for what is most sacred and most necessary.

"However, in this duty, the chaplain often finds hindrances and enemies which ruin his work. One of these enemies is personal opinion.

"How much harm personal opinion has done is difficult to judge. A soldier, after hearing a zealous talk concerning the holiness of God's name, walks back to his barracks and says: 'That was a good sermon, but I do not agree with what was said. I have my own opinion. I feel free to use it the way I want to.' As far as that soldier is concerned, the chaplain and his sacred work are worth nothing.

"At another time, the chaplain gives a stirring instruction on the Sixth Commandment which is: 'Thou shalt not commit adultery.' He tells in pointed language that any sin of impurity and indecency is a terrible offense in the sight of God. A soldier remarks: 'I don't think it is that way at all. Why, my idea about it is this: I live only once. So why not get every pleasure out of life?' That soldier has his own personal opinion, and he dares to commit sins of impurity. To him the chaplain and the chaplain's work are worth nothing.

"If personal opinion is to guide our lives, then we might as well throw away all laws, even the laws of God, and proceed to live our lives by personal opinion. There is, however, one serious drawback to this procedure: We have a Master who is checking up on us. And this Master is most strict and exact. He is the one whom the chaplain is trying to represent to the soldiers and officers. That Master is God."

With typical thoughtfulness he wrote a letter of condolence upon learning of the death of Mrs. Henry Jirak of Pilsen:

"Dear Mr. Jirak and Children:

"With these few lines I wish to express to you my sympathy and sorrow on reading that death has struck in your family. I wish to mention that I have remembered her in Holy Mass today and will continue to pray that God will grant her that happy home in heaven which is in store for those as faithful as she was.

"It is a wonderful thought to know that in the 'Communion of Saints' we are in touch with the Saints in heaven and the souls in Purgatory, and to know that our loved ones are in that Communion of Saints.

"May God's blessing be upon you."

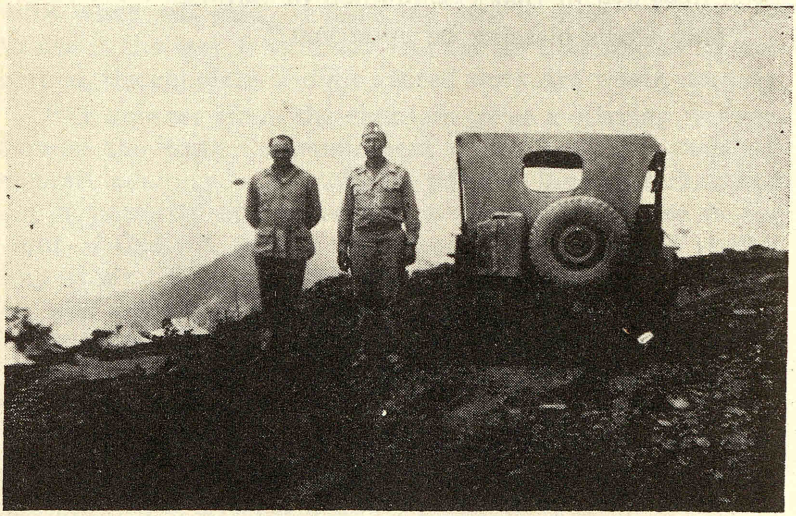
CHAPTER SIX

BURMA AND INDIA

March 29, 1945

"Most Reverend and dear Bishop:

"I have been traveling nearly the whole month. On March 4, we left Miami Beach, Florida, via air (ATC). On March 8, at 1:00 P. M., we flew directly over Bethlehem. Imagine the thrill to be up in the clouds where the angels of the Nativity had sung. We could see a part



Beside his jeep on the hills of Burma

of Jericho and the Jordan emptying into the Dead Sea. The grazing land and white rocks looked beautiful from the high skies. I can tell you that we were in Delhi, India.

I saw the large palace of Shadahan, also the Taj Mahal in Agra, India.

"I am somewhere in Burma. It is very hot here, still hotter in the jungles. A newcomer has plenty to keep him interested. The natives are very kind. Many are Christians." Later he writes:

April 30, 1945

"The work of a Catholic priest out here with the American men is very gratifying, especially when we see the efforts many make to go to Holy Mass and the Sacraments. However, the men also have the opportunity to see actually how the Catholic Missionaries live. The heroism of those missionaries puts us to shame.

"Since I last wrote you, I had the privilege to meet two Catholic Sisters from Italy. When the Japanese came, the Sisters left their school and church and fled to the hills with the native people. They took what things they could from the church—vestments, chalice, etc.—and hid them in a cave. Sisters told us the opening of the cave was so small that no adult could enter, but they lowered a young child into the cave, then piece by piece they lowered with ropes the things they wanted to hide from the Japs. The Japs never found the place, so all those things were saved. The Sisters lived up in the mountains in a cave. For 15 months, they had no Mass and no Sacraments. Their Missionary priest had been taken away by the Japs. During these long 15 months those holy souls, natives and Sisters, prayed together. On Christmas, they got up at Midnight, sang the entire Christmas Mass—Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, etc. They had everything but Holy Mass. On Good Friday of this year, our American soldiers found these good nuns up in the hills. They brought them down to live in a nearby dwelling, and on Easter Sunday, Father Glavin, our American Chaplain, said Holy Mass for them and the natives. Imagine the joy of those good people to attend

Holy Mass again and to receive our Lord in Holy Communion. Since then I, too, have had the pleasure of working with them. Our soldiers love these Catholic people."

Father Kapaun was prompt and conscientious about his monthly reports. They give an idea of his activities.



Father Manghesi, Sister Bernadette (Anglo-Indian), Sister Magdalene (Anglo-Indian), Burmese Sister, Mother Ann Mary, Sister Lina, so and so. (That is Father Kapaun's expression of himself). Father and the Sisters are Italian.

A report from India, May, 1945, to Bishop Winkelmann:

"During May I traveled by air and jeep over 2,000 miles to have Mass for the troops at the Forward Areas. That necessitated my absence from my home station on Sundays. However, the local Missionary Fathers of St. Columban have supplied in my absence.

"For Catholic civilian refugees and the Sisters, I said 7 Sunday and weekday Masses; 26 Confessions, 51 Communions. I also baptized 3 children, the records of which are entered in the local Church Register."

During July he traveled 2,500 miles; during October, another 2,000 miles, saying Mass in chapels, mess halls, recreation rooms and theatres.

July 1, 1945

"Most Reverend and dear Bishop:

"Together with my monthly report, I am sending you a few lines of appreciation for the long, most welcome, and interesting letter of May 4. It reached me on May 16. Our Governmental Postal System is doing a grand job with the mail. However, here in the jungles, we have not



With Father Manghesi, the Sisters and some of the natives

received any home papers, so I have not seen a single copy of the Advance Register since I left the good old U. S. A. I need not tell you how much I miss it, especially news of the Diocese.

"Our work with the soldiers is sometimes strenuous, sometimes dangerous, but always worth the effort. My outfits are scattered over a long distance of jungles and mountains. I travel mostly by aeroplane, making a round trip of 500 miles every week to reach my units during

May. Once my pilot and I escaped a very serious accident by about 30 seconds. I am sure we both would have been killed. After that, my Guardian Angel received a hearty thanks.

"In my last letter I mentioned something about the Missionary Father and Sisters out here. Our Catholic soldiers built a church and school for the Sisters. Imagine



"Just a bum!"

the gratitude of those good Sisters who had been up in the mountains hiding in a cave for nearly three years. They did not have a priest or Holy Mass for 15 long months. Now the priests are returning again to their Missions. They had been interned by the Japanese and were treated fairly well. However, many of them bear scars of their past experience, and one of them was killed while saying Mass. We soldiers gave the good Sisters $1,000.00 and again we pitched in and gave the Missionary Fathers $1,700.00. The Missionaries hardly knew what

to say. We took the Sisters to our Mass in the Army Chapel. When they saw it jammed with Catholic soldiers, and the Communion railing filled with about 100 Communicants, the Sisters were so impressed they began to cry. The native Catholics, too, can see that the Catholic Church is very much alive in other countries.

"One day after I had said Mass in the village, the children said to Sister, 'Why, the American Father says Mass just like our own Father.'

"Yes, one cannot help but be impressed that the



At home with these children

Catholic Church is one and the same the whole world over; even little children are able to notice that.

"I wish that the good people in the Wichita Diocese could see face to face the work of the generous Missionary Fathers and Sisters. Our Catholic soldiers who see this will appreciate so much more the struggling Missions and

their faithful priests and Sisters. I think we can appreciate a little more the great work of the society of the Propagation of Faith. When one sees the well-behaved children attending Mass, with their parents kneeling in devout prayer, many of whom are very poor and have only the bare necessities of life, it makes a person think and remember that at home there are many such holy parents and children. Surely one is as precious in the sight of God as the other, whether in Missionary lands or in well-established Dioceses."

On November 1, 1945, he reported:

"In this part of the world, November 1 is not a day of obligation. Our personnel are being shipped out rapidly so that the units here have small numbers of men. Hence, in covering long distances we really reach only a few. However, the few are as precious as many, and I believe that a priest who would refuse to go out just for a few would be seriously neglecting his duty. My farthest unit was 170 miles from my office."

He wrote to his Bishop, January 3, 1946, when he was promoted to Captain:

"In regard to becoming a Regular Army Chaplain, I would hesitate to assume such a burden, especially since the type of life itself is filled with so many 'unclerical circumstances' and one is so hampered in trying to lead a normal priestly life. However, someone surely has to take up the burden; and, if you should decide that I ought to do so, I would accept it as the will of God and try to make the best of it. Perhaps it is entirely unpriestly of me to look upon such a difficult life with hesitation, for surely a priest should be anxious to take up any cross for his love of God."

February 1, 1946

"Most Reverend and dear Bishop:

"With the monthly report come a few lines from the

India Chaplain. Nothing out of the ordinary. Our men are leaving fast; only a very few are being brought in here as replacements, so our attendance at Masses, etc., is expected to drop lower and lower. However, I am told by the Theatre Chaplain that I shall be left here as 'clean up' man, until the end, which is supposed to be in June.

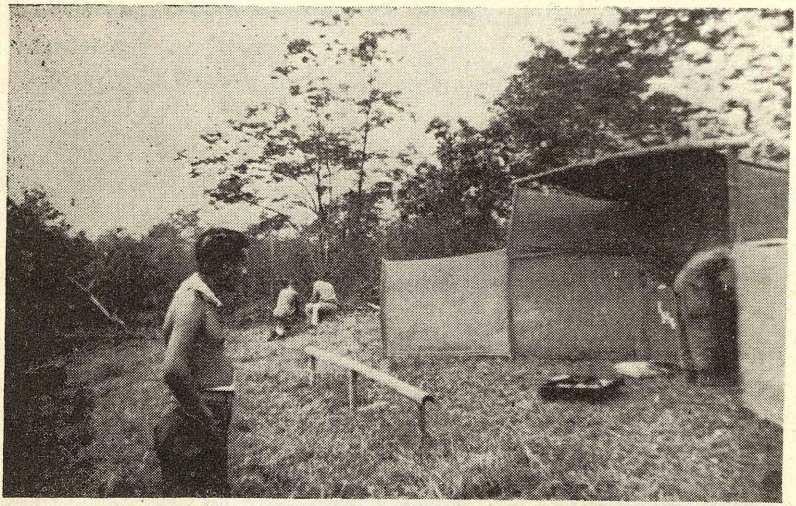
"We hear over the radio about your inclement winter. It seems almost incredible here in India, where the flowers



Two St. Columban missionary Fathers. Chaplain Kapaun smokes his pipe.

are in full bloom and the trees are in full foliage and the days are warm. In January our warmest day was 86 degrees, and the coldest night was about 33 or 34 degrees. My, what a shock that would be for us to be transported suddenly back to the States. By air transportation some soldiers get back home in three days. It hardly seems possible that we are only a few days' journey from home.

"In the army life I find that one's time is so taken up doing just 'insignificant' things that a Chaplain's review of theology, etc., is much neglected. However, the 'insignificant' things are part of our work and offer a good opportunity for patience and perseverance. Our office and time are open to all callers, so that, if we do our work, say Holy Mass, say the Holy Office and Rosary, with a short



In the distance Chaplain Kapaun is hearing confessions before Mass

meditation and a little spiritual reading, the hours of the day will have vanished and one nearly fears to examine the accomplishments.

"We were very fortunate to have Father L. Carroll, Redemptorist from Singapore, give us a 'healthy' Mission. Many men profited from the graces put before them. I profited from it, too, as I needed it as badly as the men did. In November, 1945, I made a Mission at the Cathedral here in Delhi. To make such a Mission is like coming into a quiet and peaceful village after tramping through the



Beside my jeep with a Columban Father

desert fighting a strong gale which blows sand into a person's eyes."

March 1, 1946

"Most Reverend and dear Bishop:

It looks as though we will pull up the last gangplank for our troops in India. I love my work, although it is only for a few men. I had a class of eight students studying Latin. I have only three left now, and soon will have only two. They will go to the Seminary once they become civilians. Hardly did I think when I became an Army Chaplain that I would be taking on some of the work of a Seminary Professor.

"Our contact with the local Missionaries is most edifying and uplifting, especially when one sees what sacrifices they make to do their work. I have been in their Churches and their homes. I have seen the way their people live and the simplicity that is theirs. The good Missionary is everything to these people. He is the humblest among them all, and yet he is held in the greatest esteem. It certainly is a wonderful thing to be a priest of God, no matter where one goes. Working with these poor people seems to give a very close contact with God; for I have yet to meet anyone more grateful for the small amount of help that we Catholic Chaplains have given them. God bless all of them."

Chaplain Kapaun sailed from Calcutta, India, May 3, 1946, and arrived at San Francisco, May 30. On June 4, he was separated from active service. Toward the end of that month he made a private retreat at Conception College, Conception, Missouri.

Bishop Winkelmann told him to take a vacation until August 1. But the generous-hearted priest sacrificed even part of that. He took the place of Father White at Strong City from July 16 until August 1, so that the latter could go on his vacation.

CHAPTER SEVEN

ACADEMIC INTERIM

Following the sudden death of Father Dombrowsky, pastor of St. John Church, Spearville, Kansas, Father Kapaun was appointed temporary administrator. He wrote to his Bishop, August 5:

"First I wish to thank you for the appointment as Administrator pro tem of St. John's Parish, Spearville.

"Yesterday I received my discharge from the Army (July 25). I am now able to submit my application for the G. I. Educational benefit, to attend school this September at Catholic University.

"But in the meantime, I have run up against some difficulties. First of all, Father Goracy tried to get me a place to stay, either at Catholic U. or near it. There is nothing available. Secondly, our Diocese has suffered heavily in the deaths of Fathers Dombrowsky and Mages; and I feel, if I am needed in the Diocese, I should much prefer doing pastoral work. Thirdly, I doubt seriously my present ability to meet with the scholastic demands at Catholic University. My army career of nearly two years left me little opportunity for 'books' and naturally to enter abruptly into a strenuous course of study makes one wonder if he can manage to keep up to requirements.

"According to our G. I. Bill of Rights, we can begin our educational studies any time within four years after discharge. Frankly, good Bishop, I would prefer not to go to Catholic University, at least this year. However, I shall be glad to abide by your decision, whatever it may be."



Before the rectory evergreens at Pilsen, returned from a tour of duty.

From August 23 until the end of September, Father assisted in St. Teresa Church, Hutchinson.

Bishop Winkelmann found it impossible to secure a place of residence for Father Kapaun at Washington. He then thought of enrolling him at St. Louis University. In seeking a residence, he wrote to the pastor of St. Francis de Sales Church, St. Louis:

"I do not hesitate in the least to recommend Father Kapaun to your household. He is an 'anima candida', a noble priestly gentleman. He will cause you no trouble as far as house discipline is concerned; in fact, he will be an inspiration to your assistants. He is a studious person, and I know that night life, with shows, etc., does not appeal to him."

However, accommodations were found for him in Washington; and, shortly after getting settled there, he writes:

Catholic University
October 13, 1946

"Reverend and dear Father Goracy:

"I arrived here on October 1, found Father Arand, and was assigned to Room 105 in St. John's Hall. Your description of the rooms was correct. However, they are not bad. The meals are good. On October 1, I registered, planned my course, and on October 2, I attended my first classes.

"They permitted me to take only *12* semester hours, majoring in Education, minoring in History. I explained that Bishop Winkelmann wished the Vet Chaplains to get a degree in Education to qualify as accredited teachers in our diocesan and public high schools. Professor Drobka, my advisor, looked up the qualifications required by the State of Kansas and told me that I needed not only an M. A. but also certain special credits to obtain a State Teacher's Certificate. I could qualify either in English or

History, but in neither did I have the required credits. By minoring in History, I will have sufficient credits to obtain the State Teacher's Certificate when I have completed the work required for an M. A.

"In Education we had to take a comprehensive test, in which we would receive credit for past knowledge or experience in what undergraduate studies we had previously. I made six credits in the test out of a possible



Catholic University, Washington, D. C.
"I wish I knew everything in the libraries around here."

twelve. I have now 30 credit hours in Education before completion. So that means at least three semesters' work.

"I am beginning to like study again. We have an exam in German on October 25. I have been doing considerable review and studying for it."

In answering several questions on his "Personnel Information" record at the University, filled out when he was thirty years old, Father Kapaun, the post-graduate

student, gives an insight into some of his personal habits and interests. After mentioning Kenrick Seminary as the school he last attended, he answered the following questions:

In what extra-curricular activities did you participate?
Softball, basketball, soccer, handball.
What are your hobbies or special interests?
Landscaping.
What musical instrument do you play? None.
Have you any special ability in art? No.
Give a brief statement of your vocational experience.
I was assistant for 3½ years, administrator for 8 months.
U. S. Army Chaplain for 2 years.
How do you expect to finance your education?
By G. I. Bill of Rights and Bishop Winkelmann.
Military Record? Yes.
Length of time in service?
August 9, 1944, to July 25, 1946.
Decorations—Honors? One battle star.

Because of his busy schedule at the University and the many hours spent in diligent study, his correspondence was less frequent in the months that followed. In the spring when Bishop Carroll was installed as Ordinary succeeding Bishop Winkelmann, Father Kapaun wrote his congratulations to his new superior. His first letter to Bishop Carroll was the beginning of a mutually faithful and understanding correspondence:

May 6, 1947

"Most Reverend and dear Bishop Carroll:

"Please accept my sincerest congratulations on your installation as our Bishop. I am unable to be present at the solemn ceremonies, but I am remembering you in my prayers and in Holy Mass, and I am asking God to bless your work abundantly in the Diocese of Wichita.

"I wish to obtain your kind permission or instructions in regard to myself. I have already arranged with the office here at Catholic University to take the summer course in Education and to continue my studies here in September. I plan to complete my course by the following February. I hope this meets with your approval.

"Also, I have a splendid opportunity to take my one-month training in an Army camp to fulfill requirements as a Reserve Officer in the Army. I have made application for the one-month training at Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania. This is during June and fits in nicely between the end of this scholastic term and the beginning of summer course.

"I do not intend to go to all the expense of traveling to Kansas between the close of summer school and the beginning of the September term, so I have made arrangements to remain at the University and work on my dissertation. We have made our annual retreat at the University during Lent.

"I have planned all of this and submit it for your approval and permission, but I will be very grateful to you if you permit me to continue this training without interruption."

Bishop Carroll graciously approved these plans.

Concerning his future, there was subsequent correspondence.

July 15, 1947

"Most Reverend and dear Bishop:

"During Reserve Training we were told of the critical need of Catholic Chaplains. To the eyes of the non-Catholics, we are neglecting to care for a segment of our vineyard, the soldiers in the Army. I told Msgr. Sherry that I would write you and volunteer to go back into active duty under Category One. He told me that I would have

no trouble at all in being accepted because our Catholic Chaplain shortage is so very critical. The Military Ordinariate does not want to put any pressure on Bishops and Religious Superiors but prefers to have men who realize the need and come on their own request and with proper permission. Good Bishop, I think I am qualified and would be very happy to do this work in the name of our Diocese.

"I do not want to be requesting something that would be contrary to your wishes; but, if you can possibly spare me, I surely would love to dedicate myself to this work for a few years. Category One presently is service for an 'indefinite period'.

"I would not want to leave the University before I get my Master's Degree. I hardly think I can manage to get it before Christmas; but in the meantime, I would make the necessary preparations for entering active duty with your permission.

"If there is any possible way you can permit me to do this work, you will make me very happy.

"Please give this matter very serious consideration. To me it is something most important."

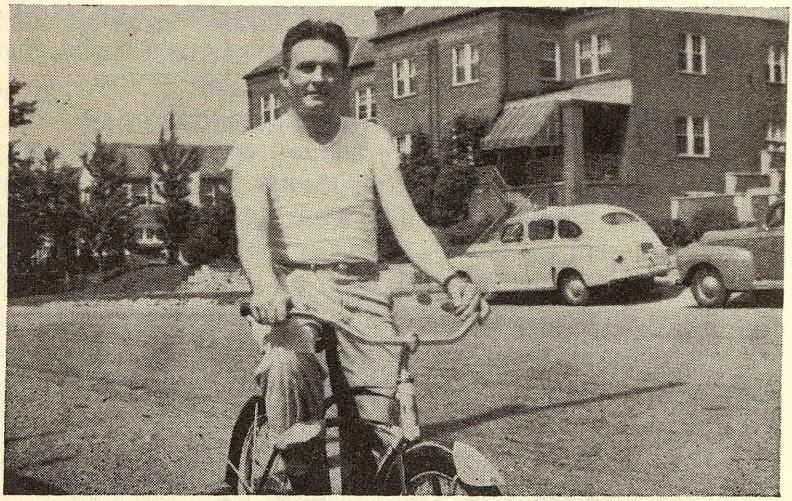
Catholic University
August 21, 1947

"Dear Dad and Mother:

"My, I hope you do not feel bad that I did not come to visit you this summer. But I am sure you understand, especially since it is such a long trip and pretty expensive too, and nowadays I am just living off what I saved up while in the Army. God knows how long that will have to last me. Our summer school ended on August 9. From August 11 till August 13, we had the Cana Institute here, a series of talks about protecting young boys and girls from the many evils of our day. In this system, the

fathers and mothers are instructed in what to do to protect their growing children. That is a tremendous problem, especially in the cities. I hope that some day I will be able to do some good in this line.

"Bishop Carroll gave me permission to remain in Washington this summer to work on my Dissertation. To get a Master's Degree in Education, all are required to write a detailed study of some problem in education. I have chosen the topic: A Study of the Accrediting of



"Another priest and I went bicycling last Sunday afternoon."

Religion in the High Schools of the United States. I am covering all 48 states and some possessions like Alaska, American Samoa, etc. That means much research, then writing the Dissertation, and getting it bound. In the office of the National Catholic Welfare Conference here I can find a lot of information. The last few days I have been working from early in the morning until 1:30 next morning. But yesterday I was very tired so today I am

taking a rest. If I get this project finished and have enough money, I might visit you for a few days in September. Just a pleasant thought. I will promise nothing at this time.

"Glad you liked the pictures. How much do you think I weigh, just looking at those pictures? Well, the scales go down to 175, so I cannot say I am doing much suffering here. That is the most I ever weighed.

"So Eugene has a girl friend. Well, that is really fine. I have been wondering just how long he would try to remain a 'bachelor'. He is 23 years old now and should be deciding. I surely hope he has a wonderful girl and a good Catholic. Maybe some day before too long we will be privileged to celebrate their 'great day', just as we celebrated mine seven years ago. I bet you had a great time with them at Sunday dinner. I surely wish them happiness. Hope to meet them before they get married. The more I think of it, the more I would like to get out to visit with all of you in Kansas this September.

"I am very glad to hear that you are well and that things are doing nicely in Kansas. Too bad you did not get rain enough for corn, but the way you wrote you should get some feed. I suppose you are busy getting the ground ready to sow again and soon to start making hay, etc."

The studious side of Father Kapaun's nature is betrayed in his thesis, the first attempt to discover how many school districts gave credit for religion. Since religion in education is a daily news topic, his study is very valuable. His serious and scholarly approach to his dissertation can be realized by the fact that part of his notes and voluminous correspondence in this project fill more than half a trunk.

With his development as a scholarly graduate student, one begins to notice a subtle change in his spiritual

direction. He is slowly forming a sincere conviction that the Master, whom his arduous soul desired to serve so completely, is calling him to labor in a particular vineyard. As the young priest himself said so frequently during his last few months on earth, "God moves in strange ways." Strange indeed! His advanced studies, in which he acquitted himself brilliantly, seemed to convince him of the need for greater simplicity in order to expend himself for the salvation of humble souls. He writes to a former teacher:

Catholic University
December 26, 1947

"Dear Sister Euphrasia: (his teacher in 9th grade at Pilsen)

"I wish to thank you for the lovely Christmas Greeting Card. I see you are still using your gift of art to make others happy, as indeed your card made me happy and brought back pleasant memories.

"After attending the University I have begun to realize what a tremendous task it is to be a teacher. Surely God must have a very rich reward for those of you who have dedicated your lives to such a work. I hope and pray that God will never inflict upon me such a task, for it would be calamitous to expect an ungifted person to assume such responsibilities. I am happily convinced that God put me in the class of people who can admire teachers but not hope to imitate them.

"Indeed this is a very Happy Christmas. Yesterday the sun was shining brightly—today we have the first snow of the year, and it surely is lovely.

"May God continue to bless you, good Sister, and keep you ever in His loving care."

Toward the conclusion of his studies, he again writes his Bishop:

Catholic University
January 10, 1948

"Most Reverend and dear Bishop:

"Our comprehensive examinations for the Master's Degree in Education will be held in the two last weeks of February. This means that I will not be able to leave the University until the end of February.

"Since my work in the diocese will make it nearly imperative that I have an automobile, I have been looking forward to purchasing one. I have compared prices between Wichita and Washington, D. C., and it seems that I could obtain a better deal here in Washington on a used car. If this meets with your approval, I would purchase an automobile here in Washington, then drive back to Kansas at the end of February."

CHAPTER EIGHT

PASTOR OF TIMKEN—IN UNIFORM AGAIN

After granting him a brief vacation, Bishop Carroll, on April 9, 1948, appointed Father Kapaun pastor of Holy Trinity Church, Timken, a predominantly Bohemian parish. There he labored until called back into service as Chaplain, October 9 of the same year. In that brief period, he captured the hearts of the people just as he later won the esteem of the fellows in the foxholes of Korea. Everyone with whom he came in contact—businessmen, farmers, priests—attested to the warmth his own sunny nature evoked in his fellow men.

Joe Fiala, operator of a bowling recreation hall, threw up his hands in surprise when asked if he remembered the priest. "Do I remember him? He used to bowl with me and the boys. The Father was a man's man and one of the best sports I have ever known.

"I'm not a Catholic, but that did not make any difference," Fiala added. "Everybody around here, Protestant and Catholic, liked him." Fiala said that Father Kapaun never discussed differences of religion unless he was asked. His sincerity in his faith was very deep.

As Father Clupny, present pastor of Timken, summed it up: "He was the most wonderful man I ever met"; adding, "a saint is the best possible description of Father Kapaun I could give. A go-getter—" Father Clupny reflected, "No, I would rather say he was a go-giver. That would better describe his spirit of service to others."

His ministry was always spiced with smiles and flashes

of humor as attested by a former parishioner, Mrs. Leonard Finger of Larned, Kansas, February 10, 1954:

"Dear Father Tonne,

"We are enclosing a picture and a letter, which we hope will be of some help to you in writing the biography of Father Kapaun.

"The picture was taken at Timken on May 11, 1948, on the occasion of our double wedding at which Father Kapaun officiated at a Solemn High Nuptial Mass. As far as we know, this was the only double wedding ceremony that Father performed as he made some remark that he hoped he would do it right.

"His sense of humor added much to his personality and did not take away any of his priestly dignity."

A good priest's influence goes on and on, as seen in these lines from one he inspired:

Cathedral of the Sacred Heart
Dodge City, Kansas
July 27, 1953

"Dear Mr. and Mrs. Kapaun:

"Perhaps you do not remember me. I met you when I was a seminarian and Father Emil was taking me to the Seminary. We stopped at your place.

"Please let me give you my deepest sympathy, but do not let this renew your sorrow, rather may it comfort you to know that he was so good and brave. I am from Timken. If I had not met Father and received his encouragement, I would never have been ordained a priest. His kindness and holy example prompted me to go back to the Seminary. He was my model of a good priest. The wonderful reports that have come from those who knew him over there prove His model was Our Blessed Lord. I want to fill in that great loss just a little and to follow in his footsteps. Ever since I was ordained, May 20, 1951, I have prayed

for his welfare. I used to pray for him before I fell asleep at night and hoped some day to give him my first priestly blessing. But now that must wait until we meet in heaven. I have saved every letter I ever received from him and also the last he sent me in October of 1950, which he wrote while riding in a jeep.

"Even though you miss him greatly, you can still feel proud of a son like him. I shall miss him, but he will always be remembered in all my Masses and prayers—of that you can be sure.

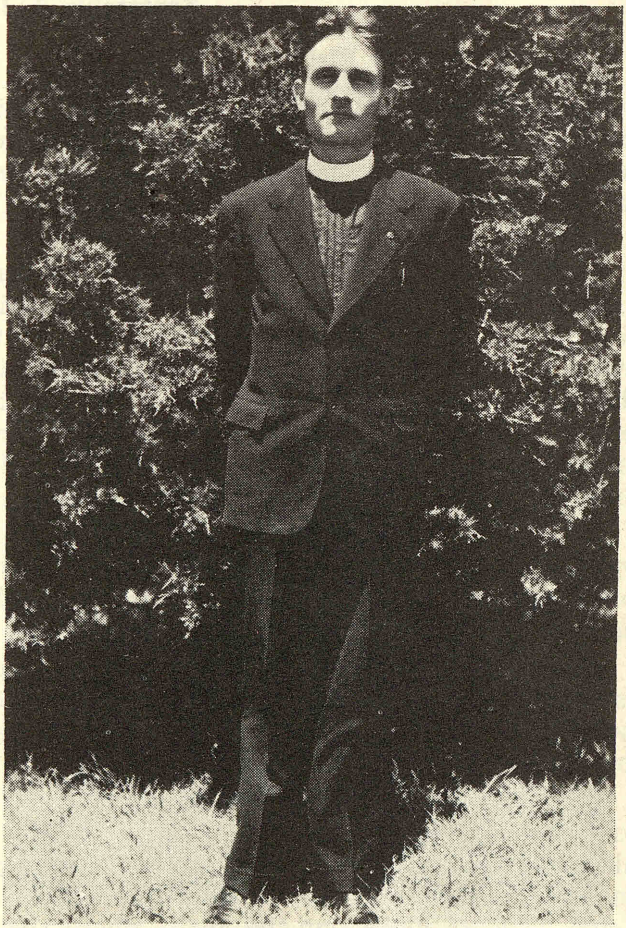
"If there is anything I can do for you at any time, just let me know and I'll be more than happy to help. In the meantime, you also are being remembered in Holy Masses and prayers for I feel I owe you something for knowing good Father Emil as I did.

"When I am around Pilsen, I'll drop in to see you.

Devotedly in Christ,
Father Fred Tuzicka"

As at Pilsen and elsewhere, so in Timken Father spent many a perspiring hour mowing lawns and tidying up the grounds. When Father called for volunteers on some parish project, twice as many as he needed turned up. Once he asked for help in removing some gravel near the church. The four men who arrived first were chosen to do the work. They were to take turns wheeling the loaded barrow. Although the men said he should merely stand by and direct, Father insisted on taking his turn. He worked so intensely that, whenever parish business called him away, the quartet would take time out for a brief respite!

Although he seemed supremely happy, there was growing in his priestly heart the conviction that his services were of much greater need in the Army than on the home front. Once again he wrote to his Bishop:



A zealous shepherd of souls

Holy Trinity Church
Timken, Kansas
September 1, 1948

"Most Reverend and dear Bishop:

"The reason I am willing to go back to active duty is the same for which Bishop Winkelmann permitted me to join the reserves; namely that we would have priests who are trained to go into duty immediately when the need came.

"If the choice depended only on personal desires, I would never wish to relinquish my work here in Timken for work in the Army. But in matters such as these, I believe a priest should be desirous of offering himself even though he personally would prefer to remain in the diocese. I have grown to love these people very much; but, in conscience, I believe I should offer myself for work in the Armed Forces, especially in this crisis.

"If you wish to discuss this matter with me, I shall be happy to call on you at Wichita any time you arrange. (However, on September 8, I have arranged to validate a marriage here in Timken.)"

On September 25, 1948, he received permission to re-enlist. While waiting for active service, he assisted at Pilsen. In his church announcements for October 17, he shows his habitual interest in the neatness of the parish grounds:

"Your pastor, Father Goracy, will return late this week. It would be a very helpful gesture if we could get a group of men on Tuesday morning to come with grass hooks, rakes, and tools to clean out the spots where the lawn mower cannot reach so that the church grounds will be attractive for autumn and winter. If a number of men can come, we should be able to complete the work in a few hours."

The work, of course, was finished in record time. On November 15, he was assigned to Fort Bliss, Texas,



Proud parents of a soldier priest

where he served with the Anti-Aircraft Artillery Corps until January 1, 1950. He tells his bishop about it:

El Paso, Texas
November 26, 1948

"Most Reverend and dear Bishop:

"At last I have received an assignment with a definite outfit, so I am forwarding my address. Our 35th Brigade is just activating, and really we are starting from 'scratch'. I do not have one bit of equipment for my office; my chapel is just being fixed. The building had been vacated about two years ago. Since then the interior accumulated a good portion of dust and dirt. We are still cleaning and varnishing the floor and hope to have it completely finished and furnished by January when we expect to have some 6,000 soldiers in my outfit alone. Altogether, we are supposed to have some 30,000 soldiers here by January or February, and there are only two Catholic Chaplains. A tremendous task!

"Today I met Bishop Metzger of El Paso. He just returned from the Bishops' meeting in Washington. I gave him your greetings; he told me he knew you very well. He was very gracious to me.

"Our camp is on the outskirts of El Paso, in 'Logan Heights', at the foot of a mountain, overlooking the desert. We can see at least 40 miles, to the next mountain range. Not even grass will grow here — just cactus and a sort of sickly looking weed. It is very dusty, and the desert sand sometimes blows so hard that it takes the paint off my car. I am holding my typewriter on my knees and am sitting on my bunk, my only piece of furniture. The wind is trying desperately to blow away our little shack, but I hope it does not succeed. Every few minutes we receive a fresh 'bath' of dust as it filters into this hut. The nights are cold and freezing, but the days are fairly warm. This army life is not what one would call comfortable, but I like it. It is like a camping trip, and the soldiers are very appreciative of what we do for them.

The Chaplain is given a very influential and important role in the training of the men, even more so than during my last tour of duty two years ago. So you see I am a happy man, and I know that there is so much good that can be done here with these young men. I am most grateful that I had a special training in Catholic University concerning 'youth and character'!"

Fort Bliss, Texas
March 18, 1949

"Most Reverend and dear Bishop:

"I feel ashamed of myself for getting in my monthly report so very late. Things have been piling up, especially after I had to spend two days in bed with blood poisoning, and then hobble around on crutches for a few days more. I think the infection is just about over now.

"Our new soldiers are coming in constantly. We were even fortunate enough to receive another Catholic Chaplain, Father Murphy from Boston. We needed him very much and we still need more Chaplains as the new units are from 40% to 60% Catholics.

"I have been receiving letters and the weekly issues of the Advance Register. They are always very welcome up here in this neck of the desert.

"Our soldiers have been responding very well to daily Mass and Lenten devotions of the Stations of the Cross and Novena to the Blessed Virgin. We have had several soldiers directly from Ireland, so yesterday we had to have a special turn-out for St. Patrick's Day. I even received a genuine shamrock direct from Ireland from the parents of one of my Irish soldiers. These Irish lads surely do have the faith, and a brogue as thick as gravy."

To the Leonard Schneiders of Timken he wrote September 11, 1949:

"Do you know how a fellow feels after he has committed

a big crime, and then has to face his loved ones? I am feeling somewhat like such a fellow as I write these lines. Please excuse me for being so terribly negligent. Many a time have I thought of Timken and its wonderful people.

"I want to thank you for the wonderful letter you wrote me from Halstead and for all the nice presents. They were wonderful, especially the fruit cake. Congratulations to Ethel Mae and LaVern on their marriage in May. You see how very far behind I am. I hope that all of you are well, and I am sure you are busy. If you ever come in the direction of El Paso, Texas, please stop at Chapel No. 2 at Logan Heights (one part of Fort Bliss) and say hello to an old 'beat up' Chaplain. At the end of my first week here, my Commanding General, a very fine man who takes an exceptionally keen interest in the work of his Chaplains, told me that I had not done my duty. I disagreed, and told him so in no uncertain terms. Ever since, he has been wonderful to me. Since my arrival last November 12, I have had no more than four hours off duty. The soldiers are wonderful to work with. They jam my chapel on Sundays, and quite a number come to daily Mass and some to daily Communion. Four soldiers intend to study for the priesthood, and two others are planning to enter the brotherhood. (They watch me very closely — so I have to give them a good example at all times.) I am kept busy giving convert instructions, marrying people, burying the returning war dead and baptizing babies. Sometimes I think how nice I had it in Timken compared with the 'primitive' way we live here with the soldiers. I miss the people of Timken, but when I think how the soldiers need a priest with them, I am most happy that the Bishop saw fit to send me to work with them. I love them and have their affection.

"I am located in Chapel No. 2. I keep the Blessed Sacrament here on the Altar. We have it fixed up very

nice, and many of the soldiers come in to make visits to the Blessed Sacrament. At the end of October my soldiers will finish their training and go to their 'battle stations'. When they leave, new soldiers will come in. And I will remain right here to take them over. I was due for overseas in November, but the way it looks they will not take me because we are so terribly short of Catholic Chaplains.

"When our outfit went out into the desert for practice firing of the guns, my Colonel said to me: 'Padre, I want you to come out and fire the first shot.' So I fired that big gun. I was more frightened than anything else, for this is the biggest anti-aircraft gun our country has. It weighs about 34,000 pounds.

"I must close. Although you hear very rarely from me, I assure you I have not forgotten all the kindnesses of the good people of Timken Parish. May God bless all of you."

In late October he received his "alert" orders and so notified Bishop Carroll:

Fort Bliss, Texas
November 1, 1949

"Most Reverend and dear Bishop:

"I have been alerted for overseas duty. I am supposed to be at the Port of Embarkation at Seattle, Washington, no later than January 2, 1950, for shipment to Yokohama, Japan. My soldiers will have left Fort Bliss by December 8. I have been thinking of taking a leave around December 12, and spending Christmas in the Wichita Diocese. I might spend part of Christmas Day with my parents. If you wish me to help out in some parish for the holidays, please let me know. I shall be glad to be of any help."

No matter how busy Bishop Carroll's schedule, he

answered every letter and monthly report of his chaplain. The following is typical:

November 1, 1949

"Dear Father Kapaun:

"I have just returned to Wichita a few moments ago after a long Confirmation tour in the Eastern part of Kansas. I wish to thank you sincerely for your very fine letter and the usual monthly report of your spiritual activity at Fort Bliss.

"Naturally, I was quite surprised to learn that you will be sent to Japan. You may be sure that I will not say anything about it until you give me the green light. At the proper time you can tell me and there will be a little write-up of your going in the Advance Register."

December 12, 1949, Father came to Pilsen for what proved his final vacation. To several friends and priests, he confided his fear that the Korean War would be a 'bloody' struggle.

He took time two days before Christmas to drop in at the farm home of Virgil Allen, a convert, who was recuperating from a serious spinal operation. The two hours Father spent with him were two of the most enjoyable Allen ever experienced. "I'll never forget him," he said, "for his cheerful and consoling visit, and the fact that he so generously gave me some of the precious moments of his leave."

Father Kapaun assisted at solemn Midnight Mass in his native parish and the next day left for the West Coast in his own car accompanied by Joseph Meysing, a neighbor, on the first lap of his trip to Korea.

"Father Kapaun stopped here at Belpre," writes Father John Vesecky, a close friend, "and paid me a visit on his way to Korea. Call it what you wish, but he told me that he probably would never return. He mentioned that the

Korean War was terrible and that it would get worse and that very many of the boys would not return. We wrote back and forth until his capture. I have as a keepsake from him, a large handmade bronze pyx that was made by one of 'his boys' as he called him."

From San Francisco, Meysing returned by train to



On the west coast before departure for Japan, December 30, 1949

Kansas, and Father Kapaun continued his journey to Fort Lawton, Seattle, Washington.

From Fort Lawton, Chaplain Kapaun went to the Port of Embarkation, Seattle, where he was processed for travel and where he remained until January 22, 1950. Future communications were from Japan.

CHAPTER NINE

JAPAN

February 10, 1950

"Most Reverend and dear Bishop:

"At last we put our feet on solid soil again. We were at sea from January 23 till February 7. The first two days were rough, as we were in the land swells of the western coast of the U. S. A. The ship rocked and heaved and many of us were sick as dogs. I was among the casualties for a whole week. The first few days aboard ship I could not say Mass. But after these first two days of discomfort, I could safely say Mass although there still remained a slight nauseated feeling. The other days at sea were incidental.

"There are many interesting things in Japan. I was very much impressed by the attitude of the people. They seem to be clean and neat and courteous. Yesterday, four officers and myself were walking to our headquarters. An old Japanese stepped off the street into the gutter and bowed very graciously. We did not like so much ceremony, but I guess he wanted to show us courtesy. We bowed back and greeted him. Other people on the street greet us with a slight bow of the head. I guess they do not know how to say 'hello' or 'good morning' in English, and we do not know how to say it in Japanese, but we accomplish in actions what we would like to say in words. I see now that I am going to be studying the Japanese language! A fellow at least should be able to exchange the ordinary courtesies."

The same day he wrote to his parents about his ocean

trip. Two weeks later he wrote:

"Dear Dad and Mom,

"I bet you think I got lost. How are you? I am fine and getting fatter every day. It freezes here, but the days are warm and sunny.

"I am assigned to the Cavalry Regiment, but we do not have any horses. We are just plain infantry — you know — walking and marching. We are located right in the city of Tokyo, the third largest in the world. The Japanese do not mark their streets. A newcomer can get lost very easily. The streets run in every direction. It will take me some time to get used to them. The people drive on the left side of the street, and the policemen have the Japanese way of conducting traffic.

"My car arrived in fine shape. The speed limit on the highways is 35 miles per hour. A person would not dare drive faster as people are walking on the highways and pulling and pushing carts, bicycles, and little Japanese cars. They have cars and trucks that run without gas; just burn charcoal and wood. Also, they have electric cars. These run very smoothly and quietly. High octane gasoline here is 12 cents per gallon; oil is 15 cents per quart. The highways are concrete and about four lanes wide. I was very much surprised to see that. The side roads are very narrow and dirty.

"The Japanese seem glad that we are here. They are kind and courteous, and they are very hard workers. In our Officers quarters, two Japanese maids keep the rooms spotlessly clean, do our laundry and press our uniforms. I never saw anything like that in any other country. I can already speak a few words in Japanese."

To his monthly report for March, 1950, he added these revealing remarks:

"Factors affecting Religious Work: I gave 6 mixed-

marriage instructions and 2 convert instructions. General Remarks: According to a very recent survey our regiment is 65% Protestants, 23% Catholics, 1% Jews and 11% no religion. In the whole Regiment I have nearly 400 Catholics. I was amazed how many soldiers had not been to the Sacraments for years. They are just as neglectful about attending Mass. A number of soldiers are very faithful and are ideal Catholics. Other Catholic Chaplains have told me the same thing. It seems that the soldiers we have today come from families who have been neglectful. This situation, on the surface, looks discouraging, yet we Catholic Chaplains have a large field to work in to bring back these 'straying sheep'. It is a great joy for me to be instrumental in bringing at least a few of them back into the fold."

He describes his first experience in an earthquake, March 10, 1950:

"Dear Dad and Mom,

"How are you? I hope you are well and that you did not blow away in the March winds. Our paper said yesterday that the Middle West had some very strong winds and dust storms.

"It freezes at night, but the days are fairly comfortable. A fellow can wear an overcoat with comfort through the whole day. Before long, spring will be here. Some of the trees are starting to bloom already. I want to see the famous Japanese cherry trees bloom. They are very pretty.

"Since I have been here we have had three earthquakes. My, the earth can surely jump around. One lasted twenty minutes. The earth just kept moving and trembling and jolted back and forth. It is an awful feeling. I guess we will have to get used to it. Some of the Japanese just 'freeze' in their tracks from fright, and cannot move or

talk. They become white as a sheet. Last year some old buildings collapsed in an earthquake. The soldiers tell me that before I came here they had an earthquake which tossed them right out of bed.

"About forty miles from here is Mount Fuji, a volcano, the highest mountain in Japan. We can see it on a clear day, as it towers above the clouds.

"My soldiers will keep me plenty busy, especially after we go out on maneuvers. That will mean a lot of traveling. And I will get to see a lot of the country.

"I do not get much chance to drive around, except on Sunday afternoon. My car comes in handy. I would have to do a whole lot of walking without it. Today is Eugene's birthday. I guess he will have a big celebration."

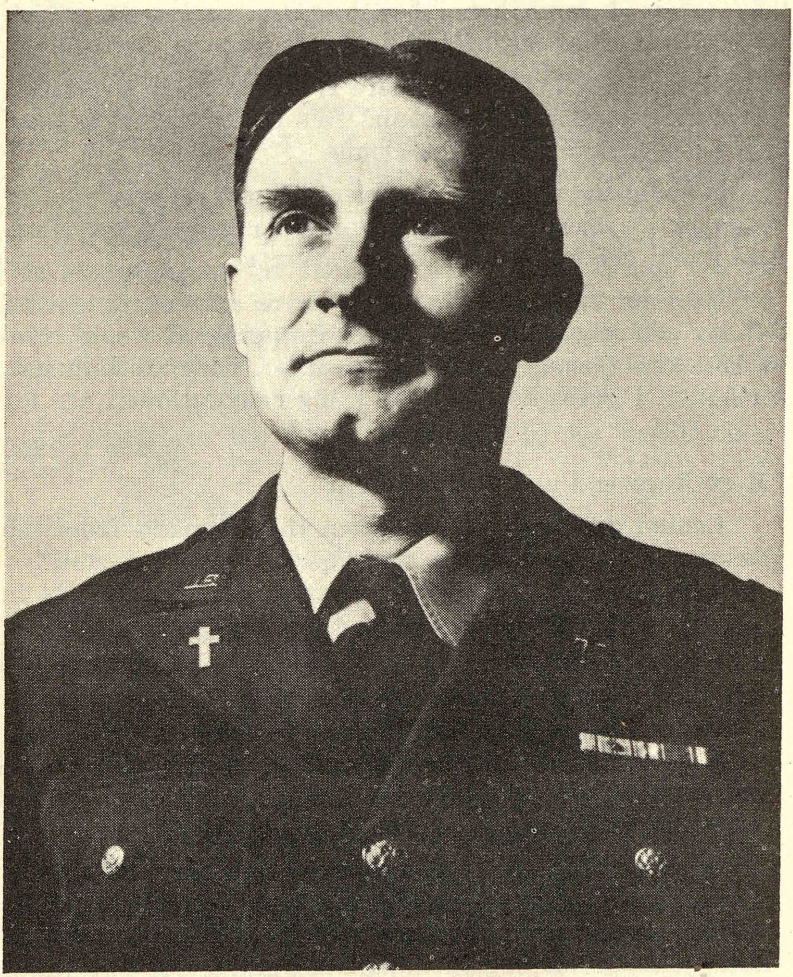
March 1, 1950

"Most Reverend and dear Bishop:

"Lenten greetings to you from the Chaplain from the Wichita Diocese who is in Japan.

"At last I am located in a Chapel and with a unit of soldiers. (None of this letter is for publication as it might be alarming.) Our Division is a combat training unit. We are not occupation forces as the other units are in Japan. We are training for battle, and will be called on in event of war in this part of the world. We go on maneuvers in a couple of months.

"Kyoto, where I have been told the Sisters of St. Joseph are, is south from us. I do not know how far. It is difficult to travel by auto; the highways are wide, but bumpy, and traffic is heavy. It takes about an hour to drive 20 miles. Train service in Japan is very good, but for a person who is not acquainted with the cities nor the language of the people, it is best not to attempt to travel too far."



Daring and devoted Padre Kapaun

March 10, 1950

"Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Meysing and Family:

"My dear friends:

"I want to thank you for the nice letter you sent me and the description of your trip from San Francisco. I am glad that you enjoyed it and that you got to see a lot of things. You saw one thing that I did not get to see — the Golden Gate Bridge. Although I drove over it, I could not see it — the fog was so thick. Isn't that something? I have to laugh every time I think of it.

"I have a job with a unit of soldiers which will mean a lot of traveling. I like to knock around that way. I am going to buy a camera and color film. The sights are beautiful and if I get them in color I will have some priceless remembrances of my visit in Japan.

"I saw the Emperor's grounds. No one is permitted to go there. They are surrounded by a high wall and a moat (canal of water). Right across the street from this canal is General MacArthur's Headquarters building, and the American flag is flying gracefully on top of it. It really is an impressive sight. It makes a fellow think, too. If I had been here five years earlier I probably would have been in some prison. The Japanese are hard workers. They have to work hard if they want to live on such a small piece of ground.

"The different automobile companies have their agencies here so a person can buy almost any kind of new car without any trouble except paying for it. Cars are higher than in the States. Ford has an assembly plant in Tokyo and the block is filled with new Fords ready to be delivered. The Japanese also have their own make of cars, much smaller than ours. Also, the Japanese have quite a few wood-burning cars, with a large stove in the back. From the fire in the stove a certain gas fume is

produced and it runs just as nicely as the gas-burning motor. In fact, these cars are equipped with a contraption on the carburetor which can be switched to burn gasoline or the fumes. This is quite a thing. If a fellow runs out of gasoline on the road, all he needs to do is to pick up some sticks, start a fire in the stove, switch over his carburetor, and off he goes again. The Japanese cars have some gadgets which we do not have in the States. They have an electric lighted pointer (red) which they switch on to show the direction they are going to turn. It is much more effective than the built-in signal system of our cars back home. Also, they have a three-wheeled car and a small three-wheeled truck, which can haul nearly as much as a small pick-up. I hope you have a very profitable Lent and a Blessed Easter."

April 1, 1950

"Most Reverend and dear Bishop:

"I wish to thank you for your very kind letter of last month. My previous letter must have sounded too alarming. It is true we are training to be transported by air to any zone of hostility. However, this does not mean our leaders are anticipating any actual werfare. But we are not taking any chances.

"The training schedule is very heavy. That reflects upon my weekday Masses as the soldiers have little opportunity to attend. On Sunday some soldiers prefer to get away from camp. Some go to Chapels and Churches in Tokyo; many do not go at all. I was really surprised that most of our soldiers are below normal in education and knowledge. Many come from the unemployed—and quite a number joined the Army just to get away from home. These lads need a priest very badly. I am getting some back to the Sacraments, and I think I will get some back to attending Mass."

Bishop Carroll answered in part, April 6, 1950:

"Dear Father Kapaun:

"Yes, it is shameful that so many boys have slipped away from the moorings of their faith. It was for this very reason that I permitted you to go to the Army because I felt then and feel now that these men need more attention than those at home. At home there is always a priest handy somewhere, but if there isn't a priest with the boys, then their faith is gone completely."

Part of a letter from Father to his Aunt Tena, March 9, 1950:

"I am amazed at some of the beautiful clothes of the Japanese. The women have coal-black hair, and some of them look very beautiful. Many wear clothes like people in the U. S. A., but they look more attractive in their own Japanese gowns. The little children are very cute, and all of them look very fat, plump like a ball. Their faces are round as can be, and their cheeks stick out like red apples. They eat mostly rice and vegetables and fish. They have a lot of fish markets, but they do not smell like most fish markets. There are many pretty things over here, and the Japanese are very particular in keeping everything just so. If a leaf falls on the ground, they pick it up. I never saw anything like it. They are hard workers."

April 16, 1950

"Dear Dad and Mom,

"I just got back from a 40 mile trip, and in another hour I will be starting another 40 mile trip, in a different direction.

"We had a nice Easter. The flowers were blooming, it was sunny, but cool. The way things look, I will be in Japan for two years. I like it here very much, but I will have to stop eating so much so I won't get fat. Up early in the morning, we get plenty of exercise, and sleep like a log. My clothes are getting tight.

"Every month I get a letter from Bishop Carroll. He is very good to write so regularly.

"I bet your chicks are getting big. And is your garden growing already? The wheat in Japan is about 16 inches high now. They raise wheat differently here . They plant it in rows about 12 inches apart and real thick. Then they go in between the rows and keep hoeing the ground. The largest wheat field I have seen is about the size of your garden. And the people do all the work by hand. They are now spading up their rice fields. These are about the same size as your garden. They get in there with big boots and sink down into the mud about to their knees. They have a sort of hoe with a blade like a potato fork. With this hoe they turn over the wet mud in chunks. Some of these rice fields smell as if they were sour. A fellow runs into all kinds of smells over here. They have no sewer system."

April 18, 1950

"Dear Dad and Mom,

"I want to thank you for the package. Nothing got ruined, but you should have seen the box. It looked as if they had set a big trunk on it. One end was completely smashed in. I figured everything must be all smashed up, but it wasn't. The cookies got pretty well crumbled up, and the chocolate Easter eggs are as flat as can be, but still good. I want to thank you for going to all the bother of sending so many good things. The walnut candies are good, too. I guess you made those. I feel ashamed of myself that I did not send you something. But over here it is quite a problem to send anything. We have to get the package examined by the customs office to make sure we are not sending jewels or something very precious. We can send those things, but we must pay a luxury (customs tax) which is very high. I want to send you some pretty Japanese fans but I did not get to it yet.

"As long as Russia does not drop a bomb on Japan we will be getting along pretty well. The Japanese do not want us to leave because they are not strong enough to keep out of Russia's hands.

"In the Japanese schools they teach the children English. Of course, they are not fluent as we who speak it all the time. The children start school when they are seven years old. The Japanese have some other things which are better than we have in the States. They have electricity and power lines all over the country. Their train service is supposed to be the best in the world. The trains are right on time and they run very smoothly — most of them are electric.

"The farmers, though, are very far behind. They do everything by hand, and it is a tough job that way. The women work very hard, too, right with the men."

May 1, 1950

"Dear Dad and Mom,

"I received the nice presents, the box with the good things and the greetings with the $10.00. Thank you so very much. I had a nice birthday. Nice and quiet. Nobody knew it, so I got by easy.

"I am sending you what I still owe you. This clears me up. It feels good to be out of debt again. I hope you have no trouble in getting it cashed. I want to thank you for letting me have so much money. I do not like to borrow money, but it did come in handy."

May 1, 1950

"Most Reverend and dear Bishop:

"We have been alerted for trouble during May, the month of Communist exhibitions. Just a short distance from our camp the Communists have their headquarters, flying the red flag with the hammer and sickle. I do not

think the Communist officials are planning any demonstrations, but some radical individuals may cause some trouble.

"We Catholic Chaplains have a monthly 'Day of Recollection'. Last month we met at Sophia University in Tokyo. All of us profited by it. As a priest, I must refurbish my own spiritual life; only then can I take care of the arduous duties of a chaplain."

Among other things he wrote to Mr. and Mrs. Leonard W. Schneider and family, Albert, Kansas, May 4, 1950:

"I think you worry too much, Leonard. Do as I did, join the Army, see the world, and put all cares aside. (More easily said than done.) However, in the Army a fellow might think he has no cares but I guess he has more of them than at home. But I love this knocking around in the Army. Last month I made around 875 miles trying to reach my soldiers and say Mass for them. Some side roads are miserable. My assistant has a hard time keeping my jeep in running order. Last week we had four flat tires.

"Thank you for the many prayers. May God reward your great kindness. You are surely wonderful for remembering what very little I did for Timken. In fact, I did nothing whatsoever. All I acomplished was to keep the lawns mowed and the cemetery clean. I had done nothing more than that, except to cause you people a lot of anxiety when I came, and then wonderment about my going into the Army again. But, here I am, happy in my work, and having plenty of it.

"My outfit is a training unit, and in case of war we will go first. It makes me feel good to think I can go right along with them. In a few days we go up into the mountain to train. However, we do not have any war scare here."

May 10, 1950

"Dear Dad and Mom,

"I did not think about Mother's Day in time to get this letter to you. I shall be remembering you on Sunday. I am so far away that I just don't get around in time to get things to you. Also this year you are celebrating your 35th Wedding Anniversary. My, how time is flying. I would have forgotten, only I began to think how old I am getting. I still remember when you celebrated your 25th Anniversary.

"I am sending you a small package with some curios from Japan. We have some of the most beautiful bushes I have ever seen. Tried to get a color camera but our store is all out.

"Lately our mail has not been coming in the way it did about a month ago. Maybe the weather has much to do with it, as the planes cannot fly in bad weather. I have a great deal of traveling to do and get to see a lot of country. Sunday I was up on Mount Fuji, the volcano. It is certainly beautiful covered with snow. The volcanic ash looks like fine ashes, and the rocks look like they had been melted and burned once upon a time. It has not erupted for several hundred years. My soldiers shoot their guns at the mountain. It makes a good backstop. A happy Mother's Day, and a Blessed Wedding Anniversary."

June 1, 1950

"Most Reverend and dear Bishop:

"I wish to thank you for your very kind letter of last month. You are most considerate to write to such an insignificant person as I am. My report of this month does not compare (in figures) with that of last month. However, this month has been one of more 'sweat'. My soldiers are scattered far apart. Making over 1,100 miles in a jeep on these bumpy mountain roads puts color into

a person's cheeks, and callouses on the extremity which has to bear the bumps and shakes. I love this kind of work, even though the figures are not a true scale of one's effort. The Catholics and even the non-Catholics admire the 'Padre' for his efforts. Several officers remarked that they do not see how I can stand such treatment over such a distance in a jeep. Such example may be of some help someday in bringing the Faith to souls who are sincere, as surely many of our non-Catholics are.

"I mentioned 'sweat' although that word is not correct. My troops are on maneuvers up on the mountains, right next to the snow line. Even with winter underwear we just about freeze. This is the first time I ever had to wear winter underwear in May and June.

"The Advance Register comes regularly, and I love to read of the many interesting happenings in the Diocese.

"I hope the Fathers have a fruitful Retreat. We have monthly Retreats here — one whole day each month. It is like an oasis in a desert for a weary traveler."

June 5, 1950

"Dear Dad and Mom,

"Lot of rain lately, the rainy season. For over three days we did not see the sun. It reminds me of Kansas when it would rain during harvest and we would get stuck with the binder. The Japanese harvest by hand. They hold the wheat with one hand, and with the other cut it with a small hand scythe. They lay the little bunches on the ground. Everything is done very neatly and not a single head is wasted. They let the wheat dry out; then they carry it to their houses, where they have a small machine like a fanning-mill, to cut the heads off the straw.

"Right now they are planting rice, a tough job, putting each plant into the mud. They use a string to make

straight rows. First they plant the rice in hot beds, then transplant into the rice paddy.

"The Japanese are also cutting mulberry branches for their silkworms. These branches grow out of stumps (just like they do in Kansas). The worms eat these mulberry leaves and branches until they start to spin a cocoon. Once the worm has the cocoon spun around itself, the Japanese boil it. The women and girls then unravel the fine silk thread of the cocoon and make it into cloth. It takes a lot of patience. Someday I will send you a piece of this genuine Japanese hand made silk."

The following are excerpts from a letter to the pastor of his home parish, June 21, 1950:

"Dear Father Goracy:

"Today I learned you had returned from Europe, so I must thank you for that souvenir letter from Rome. I shall keep it as a remembrance of the Holy Year.

"I was surprised to hear of Bishop Carroll's operation. He surely did recover fast. He is a hard man to keep down the way it looks.

"Mother wrote that the Sisters' new convent in Pilsen is progressing very nicely. I can imagine how happy you are about that.

"Well, Joe, I could write about a lot of things which I have experienced in Japan. I love it here — I guess I should not say that."

To his old pastor, Monsignor Sklenar, now living in retirement, he wrote in Bohemian, June 21, 1950:

"It is a long time since I heard from you. I hope you are not sick, or that something has happened. We have moved into a new place. We are painting the buildings and have other work to do until we have it the way we want it. We are about 40 miles from Tokyo. My soldiers are on maneuvers. I am very happy, and very thankful

to be an Army Chaplain.

"About two weeks ago I took tests in Czech language. I did very well — better than I expected. Maybe I will get an opportunity to be an Army Chaplain in Europe sometime."

July 1, 1950

"Most Reverend and dear Bishop:

"We are wondering what the people in the States are thinking about this Korean War. This time we are not so unprepared as we were at Pearl Harbor. We have something to use. Things have been happening very fast in the last week. It may all be over very soon, and again this may be a major conflict. If it is, my men will be right in there and I will go right in there with them. It would be very foolish to say that we are not doing anything about this situation, as surely General MacArthur would not have his troops unprepared."

July 3, 1950

"Dear Dad and Mom,

"I do not know what kind of news you have been hearing about this war scare. But things did happen in a hurry, and this time we feel very proud of being prepared for anything. This time Russia is going to get it in the neck. The Japanese were wondering what we would do if Russia ever would start coming this way. They know now, and they think a great deal of us for calling Russia's bluff and going to stop her grabbing. As soon as the Russians started coming into Korea, we were alerted. You should have seen how quickly we got on our toes. All of Japan went into action and we were ready for anything. Some of my soldiers have already gone. Every unit is ready to act. I give General MacArthur credit for the way he does things. He not only did a good job in Japan, but he has kept his army prepared. The soldiers in our outfit are

well trained and they are anxious to give the Russians a good licking.

"I hope you are not worrying about me. I am getting along fine. We are not as excited over here as some of the people in the States. Everything is peaceful around here. It hardly seems like war. The fighting is taking place about 600 miles from where we are."

Before a week had passed his unit had considerably narrowed the distance of 600 miles. Father Kapaun and "his boys" were on the way to Korea.

CHAPTER TEN

TOMORROW—COMBAT

July 10, 1950

"Dear Aunt Tena,

"This letter is being written on an LST in the middle of the ocean, in a large convoy. We have two submarines for protection, the Marines are to come in with us, the Navy will bombard the coast and the Air Corps will bomb the beach so we can make a landing in Korea. This is a big invasion and we are right in the middle of it.

"You should see all the ships out here in the ocean loaded with soldiers and equipment. We are expecting plenty of resistance from the Russians. We are well trained. All our trucks and jeeps are equipped for a beach landing. We have two Navy destroyers also. It hardly seems possible that we are actually going to war. I hope we will be strong enough to put the Russians in their place."

To Bishop Carroll, July 11, 1950:

"Tomorrow we are going into combat. I have everything in order, all Mass stipends, my will, etc.

"The way the Catholic soldiers are rallying around the priest, is edifying."

August 7, 1950

"Mr. and Mrs. Fred Schugart
"Timken, Kansas
"My dear Friends,

"Received your kind letter of July 26. My hand is not steady as we have gone through a whole lot. We found

this paper in a Korean house. I pity the people. They had to run, taking what they could on their backs. The Reds were too strong for us. They kept pushing us back, as we tried to hold off for more help. We have some help now. Maybe we can beat them. I have been on the front lines for eight days. We were machinegunned, hit by mortars and tanks. Three times we escaped with our lives. The night before last was the first I slept under a roof. The hard floor felt good. I hope that by the time you get this letter the fighting will be over.

"Many thanks for your prayers and for the vigil lights. God has been good to me. Others have not been so fortunate. There are many horrors in war. A fellow can stand only so much."

August 8, 1950

"Dear John and Tena
(Mr. and Mrs. John Maier of Lincolnville, Kansas)

"Many thanks for your kind letter. I wrote an answer but the Reds overran us and I could not get it in the mail.

"We are right in the front lines of fighting. This is the worst and hardest war I have been in yet. Three times now we were overpowered and had to run. They outnumber us about 15-1, coming at us from all sides. *But we will win this thing yet.*

"My, how nice it would be to sleep in a bed. These fox holes are anything but comfortable but they feel good when the enemy shells start bursting around us."

August 11, 1950

"Dear Elsie and all my Friends:
(J. H. Grafton Family of St. Joseph, Missouri)

"I ransacked a Korean house and found this paper and ink. You surprised me when you wrote that they televised some scenes in Korea. Where we are (right on the front lines) there is no such thing. So far, I saw some news-

paper reporters and photographers. We have Army radio communication sets, but they do not reach very far. Honestly, if we get a warm meal we think how nice it is. For a long time we have had no warm meals, just the C rations (in little tin cans) which we eat in fox holes. Am sitting in a fox hole right now with artillery shells whistling overhead. It is something out of the ordinary to get some sleep. There are millions of mosquitoes and we have to remain awake at night to be ready when the Reds come sneaking along in the darkness and bushes. It is a pleasure to sleep on the hard, rocky ground whenever a fellow gets a chance. It is very hot. My clothes are wringing wet with sweat all day and the heat rash just about kills a fellow. The Reds got everything I had with me. Three times I escaped with my life and that was all. I went through machinegun fire, bullets whistling all around; an 80 mm. tank shell missed my head about four feet, it blew off my steel helmet. The prayers of loved ones helped me escape. I have seen soldiers with both legs blown off; one had the top of his head completely blown off. He did not know what hit him. This fighting is nerve-racking. Many of my soldiers crack up—they go insane and scream like mad men. It seems like a dream. I don't know if I will live through the day or night. We are close to heaven but really we are more like in hell."

The following letter was written on a large (12 x 19 inch) crude sheet of rough stationery, something like wall paper.

August 12, 1950

"My dear Bishop Carroll:

"Please excuse the crudeness of this letter. Yesterday I found this paper and ink in one of the abandoned houses of the Koreans.

"I received your two letters written in July. Many thanks for your kindness and remembrance in prayers. It

must be the prayers of others which have saved me so far. Three times we have been trapped by the Reds and have had to flee for our lives. I lost everything I had except what I carried on my person. I lost my jeep and trailer with all my equipment. My assistant was shot and is now in the hospital. The Protestant Chaplain who was working beside me, was hit by a mortar shell and lost part of his leg. I was the only one who escaped unscathed. I got another Mass Kit so I can say Mass when conditions permit. Lost all my records so I will have to guess about what to report. In July I said Mass every Sunday except one (when I had no Mass Kit), attendance about 200. I prepared soldiers in Confession and Holy Communion, I guess between 300 and 400 times. I administered Extreme Unction many times. Most of my Catholic soldiers are well prepared. I baptized two boys before battle and prepared about six or eight for their First Confession and Holy Communion. I carry the Holy Oils and the Blessed Sacrament with me at all times. For nearly two weeks we were in battle, with no rest. Many of my soldiers suffered heat exhaustion and sun stroke in this awful heat and climbing mountains. We are on the front lines but the Reds have not tried to advance for several days. That gives us a little much-needed rest. We killed thousands. They outnumber us about 15-1 (we were told). Now since we have received more help, they outnumber us about 3-1. If that is the case, we should give them a good licking. War is terrible! I feel sorry for the Korean people who have to leave their homes. As the Reds approach, nearly everything is destroyed—homes, lives and food. I hope these people can return in time to harvest their rice so they have some food for winter.

"We have no mail censorship and this letter does not contain any vital information except the ratio of out-

numbering. Maybe this has been printed in the newspapers already. Our mail reaches us fairly well. I am glad to be with the soldiers in time of need. So far, I have been right on the front lines giving absolution and Extreme Unction to the dying. I had no chance to change clothes and my uniform got all bloody. I've got a clean one now and I hope it will not be stained with blood."

August 31, 1950

"Most Reverend and dear Bishop:

"We have been on the front lines all through August, with very little rest and constant nervous strain. In our regiment we have 40 killed and 43 missing in action (most probably dead, too, because Reds are reported to have killed most of the prisoners taken). This is confidential. My report for August: 12 Sunday Masses, 246 attended; 15 weekday Masses, 118; 13 Rosary devotions, 56; Holy Communions, 176, Last Sacraments, 2.

"The Advance Register does not reach me anymore, but it is surprising the way letters come in for the soldiers, who are always anxious to hear from home."

August 31, 1950

"Dear Dad and Mom,

"Thank you for the paper and envelopes. It is hard to get paper and envelopes here.

"I had no chance to write last week. We were busy moving around. We have been in the front lines all the time but the Reds did not bother us much. Some of the prisoners said they were trying to attack the other units.

"I am sending you the pictures which Eugene sent because I am afraid they will get ruined. When it rains, everything gets wet.

"I am sending you a paper Korean flag which we found in a school house. I guess the children made it.

"I am writing this letter in a rice paddy. Airplanes are flying around and our big guns are firing. They make a fellow jump every time they go off.

"I have been getting a lot of mail. Don't know if I can answer it all. You people must be all excited over this war. It seems odd to see the new soldiers coming in here, fresh from the States. They left the U.S. A. only ten days ago. Their clothes are nice and clean, whereas we fellows are all dirty and many have not shaved because they had nothing to shave with and no place to shave and little time. We lost so much stuff because we were fighting hard, then had to fight our way out of a trap. But so far the Reds were not good enough to get us, and now with much more help from the U. S. A., England, the Philippines, Australia, etc., we surely should whip them.

"We had to laugh about the Marines. They came over here with a lot of publicity and we were glad to know they were here. They went in with a big push and it looked like they were set on giving the Reds a good licking, but the Reds did the same to them as they did to us—got them in a trap. The Marines found out this is a tough outfit to fight. Don't worry about me. Am praying for you, too."

Sanjon, Korea
September 25, 1950

"Dear Albert, Pauline and Family:
(Klenda family of Pilsen)

"We are moving now, but have a few hours at this dilapidated town so I got some Korean paper and am writing this to you.

"My, how war does ruin things! You should see these towns (I ran out of ink so must proceed with pencil). The heavy artillery and the bombs blow everything to pieces. Bridges are blown up, roads are mined. The enemy went through the houses and took what they wanted. They

upset what was left so that everything is one big mess.

"We have the Reds on the run. All along the road and fields and on the mountains and hills we find their unburied dead. They had to run so fast they left guns and ammunition.



Time out for a letter home

"Our soldiers are quite happy now since we are moving forward. We had an awful time for a while when we had to back up. But it looks different now.

"Please excuse this paper. I picked it up in a wrecked

house. I am sure you will enjoy the Korean characters. I found a bottle of Korean ink so will try it out. In war a fellow uses anything he can.

"We have soldiers who were in the last war in Germany, others were in the Pacific. They told me this war in Korea is the toughest.

"I thank you for all the prayers, etc. My boys need them worse than I do, for some way or another I have not been hit, although we were in some tough spots with bullets whistling past our heads. A fellow's nerves take an awful strain and a fellow surely can pray when these big shells explode around the area. It is no fun."

Ansung, Korea
October 2, 1950

"Dear Aunt Tena,

"I did not get any mail for ten days, no food for two days, one day with no water supply except rain which we caught in our slickers.

"The Reds are on the run and we are hot after them. By the time you get this letter the war may be over."

October 2, 1950

"Most Reverend and dear Bishop:

"Thank you very much for your kind letter sent last month. It took some time to reach us as we had been trapped by the Reds and could not get any mail or anything else. This was the fourth time we were trapped, and the first time I had no fox hole to run to. With these high-powered shells exploding on all sides, one trembles and prays that none will land nearby. When a man is hit he screams for help or the others near him scream for him if he is unconscious. The whole experience is nerve-racking.

"We have broken over the Red lines and have advanced

over a hundred miles. We just wonder if the war is nearly over.

"During this awful conflict I was impressed with the way most of the soldiers were prepared spiritually. I hope that all of them who lost their lives have found a merciful Judge.

"I wish to thank you and all the good people who have been sending prayers heavenward for us in Korea. Something saved us besides our efforts, for many of us are convinced we are living only on borrowed time.

"May our good Blessed Mother protect all during this month of the Holy Rosary."

October 4, 1950

"Most Reverend and dear Bishop:

"As we have a couple of hours of waiting until our convoy takes to the road again, I want to write you about my latest experience at Ansun (City) Korea.

"We came into Ansung last Wednesday afternoon and completely surprised the town. The Communists were not expecting us at all. Our jeeps drove up to the City Hall and the Communists started jumping out the windows in hasty flight. We caught most of them. At the Police Station the Reds were just eating their noon meal. They jumped up, left their rice on the platters, and ran, but we got many of them, too. Some of them were wounded, some killed, as they tried to escape. Joe Stalin's picture and the Korean Communist leader's picture were side by side over the main entrances to the public buildings. Also, they had many posters around depicting the barbarous United States and the atrocities we commit. One of our wounded Red prisoners told our interpreter that they expected us to cut off their noses and ears when we captured them. The Russian Reds had told them that is what we do.

"As soon as we had the town in hand and the shooting ceased, I started to look around. I saw a building with a red cross on it, a hospital. I went there and was met at the door by two nurses and a doctor. None of them could speak English and I could not speak Korean. I pointed to the white cross on my steel helmet and tried to tell them I was a Catholic Chaplain. I made the sign of the cross and they showed me their blessed medals and rosaries. I took out my confession stole, which I carry with the Blessed Sacrament and with the holy oils, and they kissed it reverently. They knew I was a priest, pointed to the north, and tried to tell me where the Catholic Church was. The nurses told our Korean interpreter that they would show us the Catholic Church. Together we made our way through narrow lanes between mud houses until finally we reached the Church compound. It was littered with all kinds of debris. We went into the Church. The altars were intact, but all paintings, statues, and crosses were destroyed. I told my interpreter to tell the people I was a Catholic priest — they gave me the famous oriental bow of the head (a bow which nearly touches the ground).

"At 9:00 on Thursday the people assembled in their church which was now a very clean and respectable building. The Reds did not destroy it, intending to use it for their own purposes. They would not permit the people to go to church. They said they do not believe in God and would not let any of their people worship God. These people lost their two Korean priests and three Korean Sisters on July 5. I asked where they were. The people did not know. All they knew was that the priests fled to the mountains. Where the Sisters went I do not know. The people celebrated that Mass on Thursday with great awe. It was the first time they saw an American Chaplain and the first Mass in their church since the

godless Reds took over this community. Two Korean boys served and their Latin was perfect. As I said the prayers at the foot of the altar I could not help but think I could not speak the language of these people nor could they speak mine, but at the altar we had a common language. I imagine the people felt the same way. Some of my soldiers were at Mass and went to Holy Communion. The people could see very easily the difference between the United States soldiers and the godless Reds who closed their church.

"They told me through the interpreter that they had a choir. I arranged to have Father Maguire of Division Artillery to say the Sunday Mass as I had to go up into the hills to say Mass for my soldiers. Father Maguire said the Mass and later told me that this was the most impressive Mass he ever had in his whole Army experience. The church was packed with Catholic Koreans and American soldiers. The choir sang beautifully. After Mass the soldiers gave a donation to the community of some 60,000 won (Korean) (about $30.00 in American money). The ironic part about the Sunday Mass was that the Military Police had set up their prison compound next to the Church. While Mass was being celebrated and the choir was singing, there were some 300 Communist Red prisoners in the prison compound. They were the ones who said they would not let anyone believe in God, yet now, right in the building next to them, a free people was worshipping God in a free way, and the Reds were in prison. However, they should be grateful to be in the prison of a decent people, for we know what these same Reds did to our soldier prisoners.

"The Catholic people at Ansung told me: 'Now we have a Father again.' I told them that I would not be here very long as we would be moving ahead to a different place. And today we are moving. That is the life of a

Chaplain. It has its rough days when a person is face to face with death, and it has its days of tenderness and love as we found at Ansung City, Korea.

" . . . (I ran out of ink so must close this with pencil.) May God bless you and the whole Diocese."



'The Lord be with you' on the battlefield

This picture, taken October 7, 1950, shows Father Kapaun celebrating Mass on a battle field. The site is a grain field three miles south of Munsan, where the United Nations forces made a heroic stand against overwhelming

waves of Chinese and Korean Reds. Chaplain Robert E. Lynch sent the picture to Bishop Carroll, who forwarded it to the Kapaun family.

The improvised altar is set up on the front end of an army jeep. The closed Missal indicates that he is near the conclusion of the Mass. His arms are extended as he says "Dominus Vobiscum" just before the "Ite Missa Est."

Father's report for September, 1950, includes touching answers to routine questions:

Where is Holy Mass celebrated?

a) "Sundays — on table indoors and on hood of jeep outdoors."

b) "Weekdays — On table indoors and on hood of jeep outdoors."

Where is the Blessed Sacrament reserved?
"On my person."

Is a light constantly burning before it? "No."

Summary: "About 10 Extreme Unctions."
"1 Catechetical Instruction."

General Remarks: "Was awarded the Bronze Star Medal."

Kaeson, Korea
October 12, 1950

"Dear Dad and Mom,

"The news is the same. We are still well and alive and hoping the war will be over before long. The Reds are moving back and are getting a good licking.

"We are right on the 38th parallel north and a little west of Seoul. You can probably locate it on the map.

"The envelopes and paper you sent came in handy. Did Dad celebrate his birthday? I guess you had a big celebration on September 28, when Bishop blessed the Sisters' Convent. I see Bishop Carroll put my letter in the paper and even the Record Review had it. I better be careful

or the sheriff will be looking for me. That would be about as bad as what happened recently to my assistant. He got a notice from the draft board to appear at the physical examination room to be drafted and he is in the Army now over two years.

"Well, we soldiers are thankful for all your prayers and Masses. Father Goracy wrote that many people came to the Mass for me, even the whole choir, so they had a High Mass. Somebody must be praying hard for us. No bullet got me yet although my pipe got wrecked and the day before yesterday a machine gunner sprayed us with bullets but we jumped into the ditch too quickly.

"May God bless you and keep you in good health."

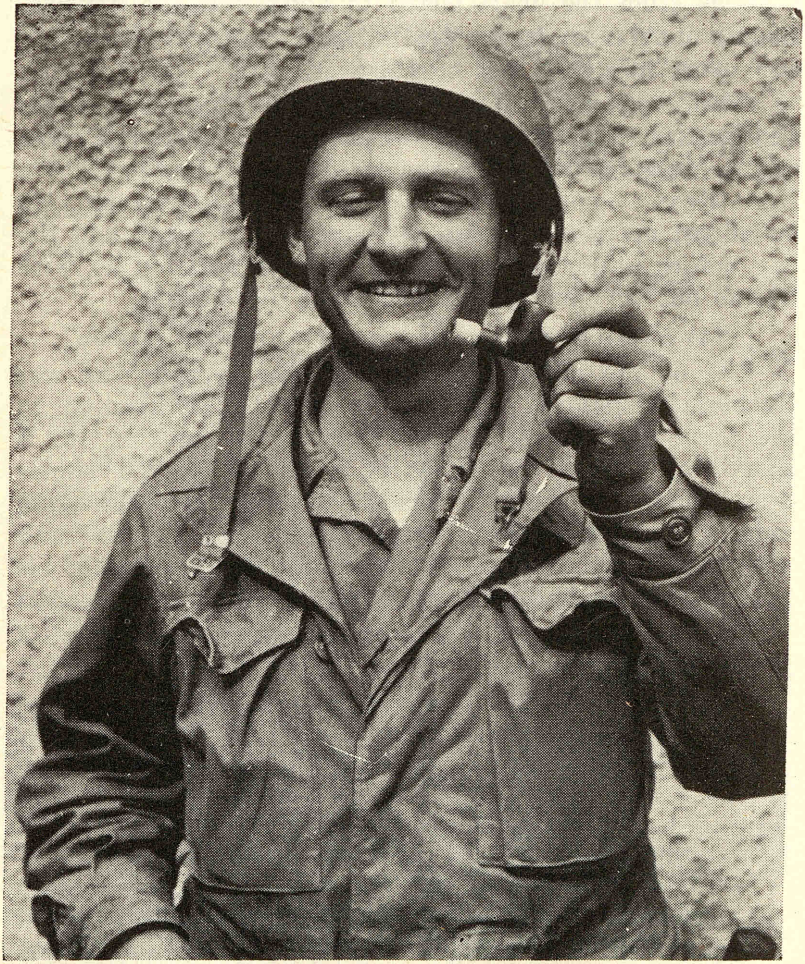
One of the minor casualties of the Korean War was Chaplain Kapaun's pipe, his inseparable companion in the thick of battle. He had to give up smoking for a short time, when the bullet of a North Korean sniper demolished the stem of his favorite briar. Escaping unhurt, he quit smoking only long enough to whittle a new stem from Korean bamboo. In another battle his pipe was again knocked out of his mouth.

On October 16, 1950, Father sent to Bishop Carroll a package with this note:

"Enclosed are some items of interest which we picked up in this Communist-infested country. Perhaps some school might like to have these as items of curiosity. God has been very good to us and we are still alive." (This was the last letter from the Chaplain.)

The items were as follows:

1. A large painting on rough canvas of the commander-in-chief of the North Koreans, Premier Kim Il Sung.
2. Sketch of Lenin, surrounded by Stalin, Trotsky and other Russian revolutionaries.
3. A full-length picture of Stalin looking over a harbor.



The padre with the broken pipe. (International News Photo)

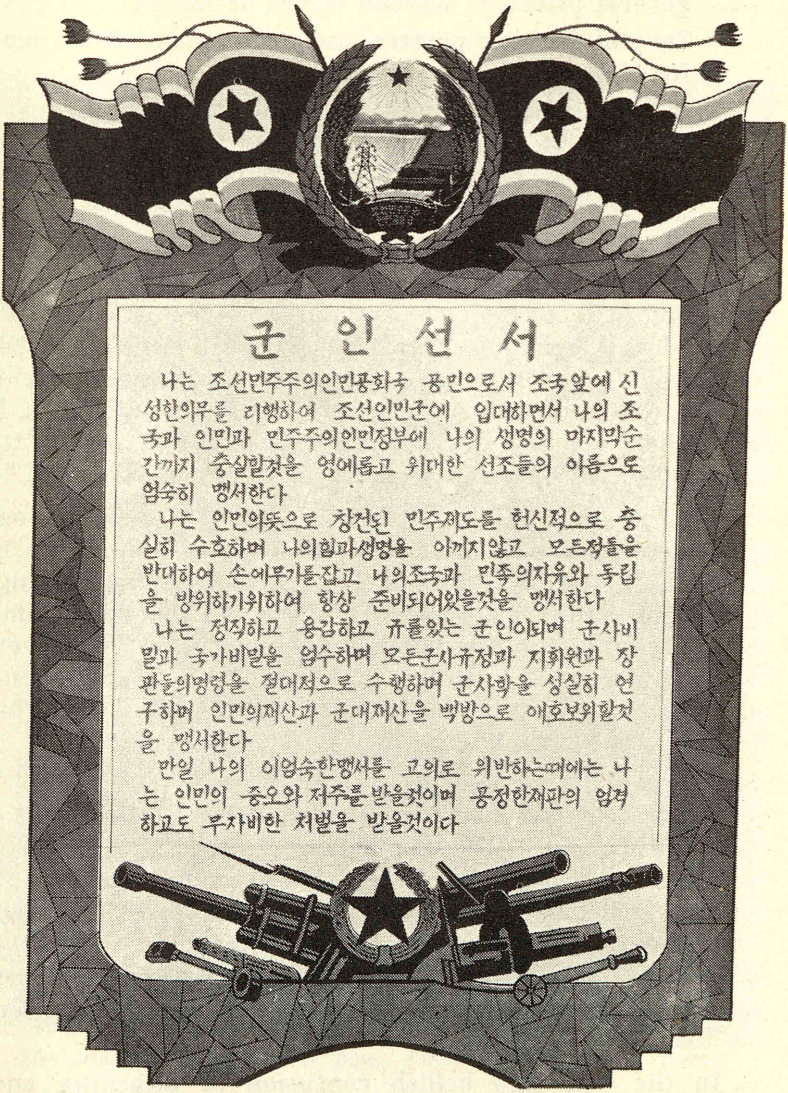
4. Several pieces of Korean script or money.
5. Several flaming posters and arm-bands with a big Red Star in the middle.
6. A bulletin containing a pledge of the North Korean Communist soldier, translated as follows by Chin-Ok-Kim, a Korean student at the University of Wichita:

"I am a good soldier of the Korean People's Republic. When I enter the People's army I will act with all confidence and will accomplish my duty as the government orders. I will fight for our Korean People's Republic until I die. I will fight for our people and Korea's freedom. I will also keep the secrets of our People's army, absolutely. If I break this most important regulation, I will be willing to accept any kind of punishment from the People's Court."

The military might of North Korea is depicted on one large poster. Another item, an emblem painted on a piece of silk cloth, displays at the top a Red Star shining down on a dam. Chin-Ok-Kim explained that this dam, one of the largest in the world, was built on the Yalu River by the Japanese. The dam is surrounded by Korean farming emblems. At the bottom flames the legend: "The Korean People's Republic.

Such were the fanatics Father Kapaun had to face. They were suicidal in their blind zeal for a blind cause. If there had ever been any doubt that the Communists were behind the conflict in Korea, these "items of curiosity" certainly dispelled it. The pictures and bulletins were found hanging in the public building of Ansung when the Americans took the town by surprise. One Red prisoner expected the Americans to torture him — that is what the Reds had told him.

In the wild and hellish confusion of attacking and counter-attacking that preceded Father's capture, no one



군 인 선 서

나는 조선민주주의인민공화국 공민으로서 조국앞에 신성한의무를 리행하여 조선인민군에 입대하면서 나의 조국과 인민과 민주주의인민정부에 나의 생명의 마지막순간까지 충실할것을 엄숙히 맹세한다

나는 인민의뜻으로 창건된 민주제도를 헌신적으로 충실히 수호하며 나의힘과생명을 아끼지않고 모든정들을 반대하여 손에무기를잡고 나의조국과 인민의자유와 독립을 방위하기위하여 항상 준비되어있을것을 맹세한다

나는 정직하고 용감하고 규률있는 군인이되며 군사비밀과 국가비밀을 엄수하며 모든군사규정과 지휘원과 장관들의명령을 절대적으로 수행하며 군사학을 성실히 연구하며 인민의재산과 군대재산을 백방으로 애호보위할것을 맹세한다

만일 나의 이엄숙한맹세를 고의로 위반하는때에는 나는 인민의 증오와 저주를 받을것이며 공정한재판의 엄격하고도 무자비한 처벌을 받을것이다

Pledge of a Communist soldier

observer could give an accurate or complete account. Let the boys who shared that hell tell the story. Their acounts may overlap. There is repetition. There is even apparent contradiction. Fighting for their lives, they could hardly be expected to keep a detailed record. From these brave men the reader will get a picture of Chaplain Kapaun, and definite, spine-tingling proof of his daring and devotion.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

WILLING CAPTIVE

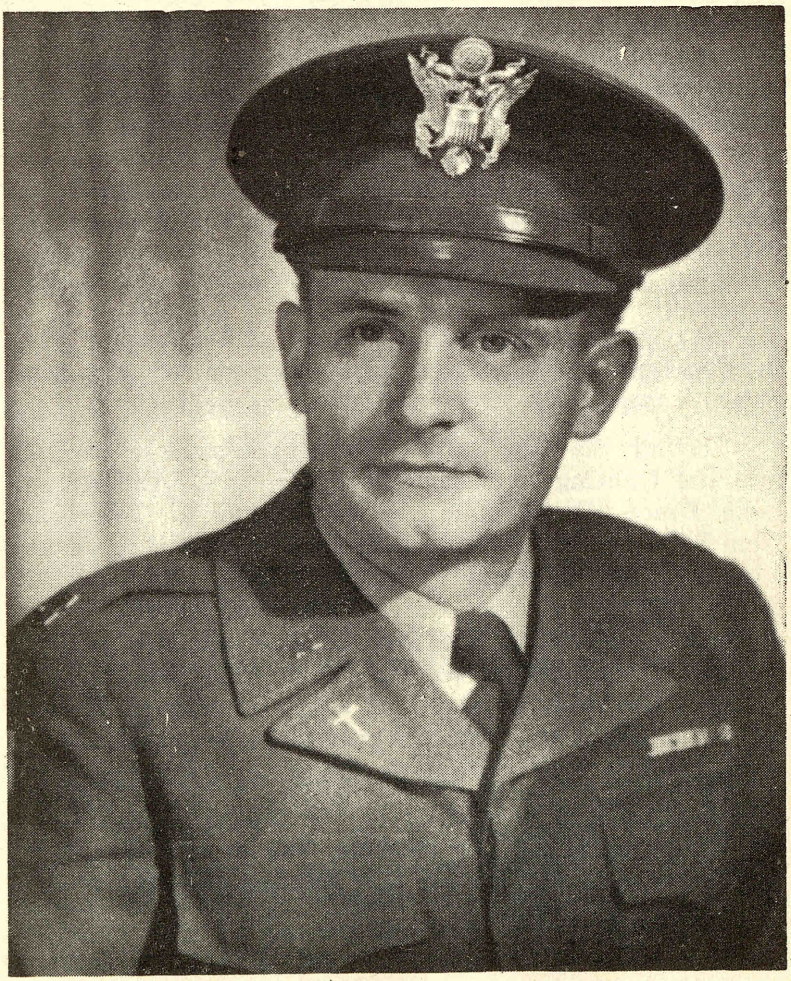
The first authentic reports of Father Kapaun's ordeal as prisoner of war and his edifying death were gleaned from repatriated American soldiers, after their release from prison camps during the "Big Switch" operation at Panmunjom. The Chaplain was mentioned constantly by those who knew him in battle and later in the prison compounds. He was their hero — their admired and beloved "Padre". No one could say enough about his bravery, his constancy, his love and kindness and solicitude for his fellow prisoners.

A Korean correspondent for the Associated Press sent the following dispatch to the United States — a simple, yet eloquent and unanimous expression of grateful fellow P. O. W.'s:

"We remember Father Kapaun for his great humility. No task seemed impossible to him, and he never got disturbed about the amount of work that was always his. His constant cheerfulness reflected his inner piety and devotion. One would never guess that he was a very educated man.

"In the first exciting weeks in which the 1st Cavalry Division was in combat, when we were not sure if we were going to last it out or not, we were all impressed by the untiring activity of Father Kapaun. He said Mass for the men of the 8th Cavalry Regiment under all sorts of conditions. On one occasion his Mass Kit was completely destroyed by enemy fire. We provided him with another Kit flown in from Japan. But a few days later,

this Mass Kit, too, became the victim of shrapnel. Msgr. Sherry picked up altar equipment from the Korean priests and placed the same in a portable typewriter case. But



"All things to all men"

to Father Kapaun the going was too uncertain to risk leaving the Kit in a jeep, when he might have to take cover from in-coming shells, so he placed the articles for Mass in his combat jacket.

"Sometime in October of 1950, Father Kapaun took the wheel of a jeep loaded with wounded men when the driver was killed, and drove the patients over fire-swept roads to safety. This was just another day's job for him and he became a legend to the men of the 8th Cavalry Regiment. In those early days, equipment was lost faster than it could be replaced, so that Father Kapaun just borrowed a Korean bicycle when his jeep was destroyed and proceeded on his rounds on the Taegu perimeter.

"At one time his pipe was shot out of his mouth. When the men saw him again, his pipe was repaired with some adhesive tape he had received from the medics.

"During the Red attack, Father Kapaun went back into the fighting to assist Dr. Clarence L. Anderson of Long Beach, California, and was captured. We heard from him almost daily for about three weeks from various men who had managed to escape. Some 1200 had been taken prisoner at that time. The weather had turned extremely cold when the Red Chinese attacked and the last report we received was that his feet had become badly frozen. However, he was still administering to the sick and wounded.

"His Regiment had recommended Father Kapaun for the Distinguished Service Cross, the second highest award for valor. Whether he received this award or not, all who knew him are agreed that he was Distinguished in the Service of Christ."

Unsolicited testimony comes from Peter V. Busatti. It is profoundly touching and deeply sincere. He titles it:

MY CHAPLAIN WAS A SAINT

"I never knew my chaplain until the night of November 1, 1950. My regiment, the 8th Cavalry Regiment of the 1st Cavalry Division, was ambushed and surrounded by the Chinese at Unsan, Korea. All hell broke loose on this night, mortars were falling in on us, machinegun fire broke out from all sides, men were running and screaming at us from all directions. It was a massacre too difficult to describe in detail. Almost all of the group I was with were killed or captured. I moved across the valley to where I heard the most firing, figuring at least I would have someone to fight with. I finally found myself within yards of this G. I. stronghold, awaiting the proper opportunity to make a run for it. As I was lying in a large fox hole getting ready to go, someone came flying into my fox hole. This was my first meeting with Father Kapaun. He asked me my name and how I felt. I told him my leg was stiff and my back hurt; an old shrapnel wound in my back had reopened. He ripped open my shirt and put some liquid on it. I asked him if he was a Catholic Chaplain and he said 'Yes'. He said an Act of Contrition with me and blessed me. He told me I was about 50 yards from the G. I. Perimeter, and that I had better get out there fast. A few minutes later I made a run for it and jumped over the sandbags which encircled the area.

"Lt. Mayo, whom I consider the best combat officer I've seen, stood in the middle of the perimeter and was shouting orders to all the men in this defense set-up. I believe this was the last organized resistance of the battle. Mayo placed me in a position just right of the perimeter. During the fighting, someone shouted, 'there goes the chaplain'. We looked over and saw a few Commies running down the road with the chaplain. Lt. Mayo shouted, 'Shoot them Gooks'. A few men directed their fire on the

captors and the chaplain got away. This didn't stop him though — he was still administering last rites and taking care of the wounded all around the area. Lt. Mayo, who was directing the defense masterfully, picked four men, Larry 'Duffy' Nolan, two other G. I.s whose names I do not know, and myself. He told us to get some North Koreans who were in a ditch preparing to set up a machinegun. All I can remember is that all four of us were screaming 'Banzai' and getting the Gooks. Larry Nolan and I got back into the perimeter; the other two were killed. Just about this time my mind sort of snapped and I don't remember what happened until the next day when I found myself in a large covered hole full of wounded men. Some G. I.s told me later that the chaplain had pushed me into this hole.

"That same night we were captured—. The closest one to me was John Palma of Brooklyn and Captain 'Doctor' Anderson who was doing a tremendous job of administering aid to the men. I don't know how Father Kapaun was captured the second time. We didn't see the chaplain until a few days later, during the march to the prison camp. A few G.I.s offered to help the chaplain who found it difficult to walk because his feet were frost-bitten.

"I next saw Father when we arrived at Pyoktong. This last meeting with him I shall never forget. It was early morning, about 7:00 or 8:00 A. M. We were standing outside a hut. Father Kapaun walked over to me and asked, 'How do you feel, Pete?' I was amazed that he remembered my name. He said these words which remain in my mind up to this day: 'Pete, you won't have to worry too much now.' I asked why I didn't have to worry, and he said, 'Because you'll be going home very soon.' I laughed, because it seemed so preposterous. I said, 'It's O. K., Father, I'm not scared, because you're around, and if I

die, I might get to heaven.' He patted my shoulder and told me that was a good attitude and hoped that I would be the same after I arrived home. Some other fellows gathered around and our conversation ended. I couldn't get his words out of my mind. I prayed to God that Father was right, though it did sound fantastic to me.

"A few weeks after this incident, two days before Thanksgiving, 1950, about 2:00 A. M., a most unusual thing happened. We were all clustered in our groups, trying to sleep. Between the cold and the body lice, we found it quite difficult. All of a sudden a light flashed in the midst of our group. The guard looked at the paper he had in his hand and read my name from it. While I was putting on my combat boots all kinds of thoughts passed through my mind. The main one was that they were going to kill me. Then the thought of what Father had said flashed across my mind. I was scared and happy at the same time, mostly scared. I tried to memorize as many names as I could, just in case they didn't kill me.

"After the Chinese guard started walking, I saw other G.I.s with guards. Well, Father Kapaun was right. The Commies picked 27 wounded men to be released for propaganda. We arrived in our lines Thanksgiving Eve, 1950.

"Is Father Kapaun a Saint? As far as I'm concerned, he is. If I were able to send a note to heaven, I would say, 'thanks to a great priest, a great soldier, and a great man — way up there in heaven. If anyone deserves heaven, it certainly is you, Father — I shall never forget you."

Another unsolicited letter to Bishop Carroll speaks for itself:

1400 Kyoto, Japan
February 28, 1951

"Your Excellency,

"Father Kapaun and I landed at Po Hong Dong with the 1st Cavalry Division on the morning of July 18, 1950.

"On the hot days of July and August by the bank of the Naktong River, a G. I. could come almost any day and find a simplified, home-made altar on the hood of a jeep. There was Father Kapaun saying Mass in the extreme heat almost ready to pass out from the heavy, warm garments being worn.

"He also climbed many a hill and mountain just so he could make some lonely G. I. feel a little better after talking to him.

"About 35 miles south of the Manchurian border on the 1st day of November, near Unsan, Korea, we were all feeling in deep sorrow at the close of Father's Mass. We were completely surrounded and everyone knew it. Thinking of our loved ones back home, of ourselves. Would we live to see daylight again? No one knew, but everyone prayed, and prayed hard, hoping that God would help us out. Little by little the enemy was closing in on us. We had to do something, but what? If we could hold out till morning we would get some reinforcements. We couldn't possibly hold out that long. There were too many of them. Col. Walton, our Battalion Commander, finally gave us the order to withdraw.

"By 11:00 P. M. that night we were surrounded three times, and had broken through each time. All the while this was going on we became very disorganized. I ran into Father Kapaun as we were withdrawing. About a mile or two down the road Father and I were helping out the Medics with the wounded. All of a sudden machine-guns, burp guns, and what not, opened up on us. There we were, in the middle of an ambush. That, Sir, was just the beginning of a horrible nightmare. But that is where I also lost contact with Father Kapaun. That night there were 995 dead, missing and wounded in our 8th Cavalry Regiment alone. 'Newsweek' magazine came out with an article about what happened that night. The article was

entitled 'The Halloween Party,' but the battle is well known as 'Bugle Valley' to the men who made it out alive.

"Later on, I tried to locate Father Kapaun. This is what I gathered:

"Lt. Curry, a medical officer, and a good friend of Father Kapaun, was last seen giving first aid to some wounded men. By his side was Father. One G. I. told them to run, practically screaming at them, but they wouldn't leave the wounded for anything in the world.

"I have prayed many a time for the safe return of Father Kapaun. The first Mass said at our Battalion by Father Lynch was offered up for Father Kapaun, who is still listed as missing in action.

"I'm sure there are hundreds of G.I.s who will never forget what Father Kapaun has done for them. In their hearts they will always remember how he kept up the G.I.s' morale, and most of all how he helped a lot of men to become good Catholics.

"I'll never forget him as long as I live.

Just another G.I., Respectfully,
Pfc. Ernest J. Ritter."

Pfc. Patrick J. Schuler of Cincinnati, Father's assistant and driver, had this to say:

"Father and I had our pup tent in a cornfield near the Third Battalion aid station and CP (command post). Father had said four Masses on All Saints' Day. We went to bed early but got up on the alert to move out, about 11:00 that night. We loaded the jeep and trailer and moved forward to join up with the First and Second Battalions. They were trying to get out by turning onto another road. The road behind us wasn't safe.

"But we ran into a Communist roadblock ahead and had to turn the vehicles around. Father and I picked up a lot of wounded, put them on the jeep and trailer, and

came back to the Third Battalion CP. The medics took care of the wounded on the road. 'Stay with the jeep and say your prayers,' Father Kapaun told me. 'I'll be back.'

"A few minutes later the Chinese attacked us right there. I set fire to the jeep and ran looking for Father. I shouted his name but could not find him. Then I went back across the river with two others. I figured that Father would leave, too."

Major Veale Moriarty of Jacksonville, Florida, added: "I saw him with Dr. Anderson, working on a wounded man in our aid station, which was also the Third Battalion CP, about 2:00 A. M. The doctor brought the man in because we had light in the CP. The attack was breaking on us then. I believe they were both getting ready to leave later on, as planned, but they heard of someone being injured and they went back."

Sgt. Alfred Joseph Patrnode of Providence, Rhode Island, confirmed this:

"I had seen Father Kapaun on the early afternoon of November 1. He was preparing to say Mass for the boys around the Third Battalion CP. That night I ran into him again near the CP. We knew the Chinese were coming at us. Then suddenly everything opened up. We went back about 500 yards and crossed the river. Father Kapaun and Dr. Anderson came across, too, but when somebody said he'd seen one of his buddies getting hit, Father Kapaun said he was going back in. Dr. Anderson went with him. That was after 3 o'clock in the morning."

"Father Kapaun had several chances to get out but he wouldn't take them," declared Warrant Officer John H. Funston of Brooklyn. "He could have left with the regimental CP earlier that night. Later, when he did get out, he went back and he stayed to the end, when the last uninjured men were leaving the perimeter."

Back in the combat area, before dawn on November 3, L Company had formed a perimeter or small defense zone. Inside this they dug holes where they sheltered the wounded.

"I was with K Company on the hill," said Pfc. Clarence Matlock of Phillipsburg, New Jersey. "The Chinese hit us about 3:00 in the morning of November 2. We got our men off the hill, and when I reached the perimeter down below, I saw Father Kapaun there. I left on the night of the third."

"I saw Father the evening of the third," said Sgt. James R. Petergall of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. "The perimeter was about 50 yards wide — in an open field. He was in the center, going from hole to hole, taking care of the wounded. He was under small arms fire and heavy mortar fire all the time.

"Next day we had orders to withdraw. Any wounded who thought they could make it could leave with us. I was told that Father Kapaun and Dr. Anderson were going to stay behind with the other wounded. When we left, the area was under artillery fire. The Reds were dropping white phosphorus on us. That's the last I saw of Father Kapaun."

"I can't imagine his leaving when there were wounded men there," said Chaplain (Capt.) Donald F. Carter of the Church of the Brethren from Long Beach, California, a Protestant chaplain with the 8th Cavalry and a good friend of Father Kapaun.

Major Moriarty relates:

"Once, in the Taegu area, I saw him going around on a push bicycle; he had lost his jeep, and for six weeks he rode that Korean bicycle to visit the battalions and companies.

"When we were fighting on the 38th parallel, a jeep

ambulance had loaded two wounded men when the driver was killed at the wheel. Father Kapaun went up, dragged the dead man to one side and drove the wounded back, under mortar and machine gun fire."

"Going north, our convoy ran into resistance about 8:00 one morning," said Pvt. Pat Schuler. "Father Kapaun left in the jeep and when he hadn't returned six hours later, I drove up front to look for him. There he was, quite calm, under machinegun fire.

" 'I broke my pipe,' was all he said. 'A sniper opened up on me and I had to crawl to reach a wounded man . . . I broke my pipe.'

"He'd sit there, just as calm," said Schuler. "What a man!"

This striking snapshot was taken during the terrific



Capt. Dolan, left, and Chaplain Kapaun, right, leading an exhausted soldier out of the line.

struggle that followed a North Korean "banzai" charge through Tabu-dong valley.

The accompanying picture has brought to light this factual and poignant story. In the awful battle the Communists outnumbered the defenders 45 to 1. The latter, isolated from their supply lines, put up a stubborn and heroic defense, even though the enemy had far larger numbers and certain points of vantage in the terrain. Fighting cold and heat and hunger and hills and hordes of North Koreans for nine days, the Americans finally beat them back enough to get their wounded out to safety. In the picture, Captain Jerome A. Dolan of the Medical Corps is holding the right arm of the battle-weary soldier, name unknown. Likewise unidentified is the soldier to the extreme left. The man being helped has been on the firing lines for weeks without any relief, very little sleep, little food, and always surrounded by a fanatic enemy. Even then, we are told, this lad did not want to leave, but had to be pulled out of line. After a few days' rest he said he wanted to go back.

Supporting this G.I.'s left arm is Father Kapaun himself, "our battalion chaplain and one of the finest men it has been my privilege to meet," according to Captain Dolan, who then relates how Father Kapaun and Doctor Anderson elected to stay with the wounded, though they knew that capture meant certain death. For some unknown reason, they were not killed when taken prisoner, possibly because the Communists expected to win them over and through them, win others. The G. I. behind Father is Sgt. Floyd Johns of Tampa, Florida.

CHAPTER TWELVE

A LIEUTENANT REFLECTS

Brave men were numerous in those horrible hours. Among these was Lt. Walter Mayo, "the boy from Boston College", as his buddies called him. Peter Busatti describes Mayo as "the best combat officer I ever saw." The Lieutenant masterfully directed the defense of the small circle of Americans who were completely surrounded. In four letters written with painstaking accuracy and profound sorrow, yet with unbounded admiration, Lt. Mayo creates a picture of Father Kapaun, before and after his capture, that is nothing short of heart-rending:

February 5, 1954

"Dear Father Tonne:

"I was very happy to receive your letter and will try to give you some additional data on Father Kapaun.

"I first met Father about the 2nd of September when we were fighting outside of Taegin. I was an Artillery Observer. We were attacking hill Number 401 and were having a difficult time. I was up in a forward position trying to get artillery on the hill when I turned around and there, sitting right behind us exposed to a sniper's bullet, was a chaplain 'carrying' a carbine. I said 'hello' and warned him of the snipers but he did not get excited. He merely moved a few feet down into the gully and asked where he could find some of the wounded. He spent the remainder of the afternoon and evening taking the wounded back, constantly under fire.

"From then on I saw him pretty often, as I went to

Mass on one side of a hill with the top under fire and the enemy only about 400 yards away. He was always burying the dead enemy soldiers and helping graves registration with ours when things were quiet.

"Always with his pipe or a cigar in his mouth, he was an inspiration to everyone, being so calm and cheerful in a difficult situation.

"You know of the incidents in which his assistant had been killed and his Mass Kit lost at Pong-dong and of his riding around on a bike when he could not get a jeep. Wherever and whenever there was action, he was always there to help the wounded and give solace and the last rites for the dying. It was the same all the way up from Taegen to Seoul to Kaeseng to Pyengyang to Anju and then to Unsan.

"On the morning of November 1st, 5 miles southeast of Unsan, the Third Battalion 8th Cavalry was in a small valley approximately fifty miles from the Yalu River. Father Kapaun said Mass that morning as he had on most previous mornings since we had come up from Pyengyang four days before.

"That night the Chinese hit us and hit us hard. They were right in amongst us. Half hour later, at 1:00 A. M. on the 2nd, I went over to a dugout by the side of the road where Battalion Headquarters were situated. It was covered with logs and dirt and was large enough to hold about 40 men. Everything was mixed up. Chinese everywhere! But in that dug-out, Father had gathered about 30 men and was tending them. We guarded the entrance and gathered more men and fought Chinese until morning when they started to drop mortars right into the entrance which was about wide enough to drive a truck down. By that time we had gathered about 20 more wounded and put them down there.

"All the while, Father was carrying them down into

comparative safety. He refused to leave them when we had to leave at dawn to fall back into the field behind and establish a perimeter defense.

"He showed up later at about 10:00 A. M. and was crawling out into the open and dragging our wounded back into the perimeter all day long. He would sit up on a parapet scanning the field in full view of the snipers who were knocking the men off fast.

"His pipe was shot out of his mouth but he put adhesive tape on it and continued to smoke. He must have dragged about fifteen or twenty men out of that field into our trenches.

"When night was approaching, he told us he was going back to the dug-out which was about 150 yards from our outposts. He said he had to be with those 50 wounded. And back he went.

"That night the Chinese attacked us in force and it was hand to hand fighting at times. We knew that they must have gotten into the dug-out. That was the night of the 2nd.

"I found out that the Chinese had thrown two grenades down into the dug-out and killed some of the wounded. But then a wounded Chinese officer that we had captured and put into the dug-out with the Americans went out and stopped the Chinese from killing anyone else and brought them down into the dug-out. They took Father along with about 25 wounded who could walk. Father had cared for this Chinese officer and sent him out to stop the grenading.

"The next day was the 3rd of November and we were still surrounded on the valley floor. We could not get out of our positions and find out what happened to Father. We held out, about 250 of us plus 150 more wounded, that night and next day.

"We were almost out of ammo and had had no food for two days so we had to get out. We could not carry the wounded, so Captain (Dr.) Clarence Anderson volunteered to stay with the 150 wounded.

"On scouting a way out of the trap, I went to the dugout and the wounded who were left told me what had happened to Father.

"I was captured four days later. I saw Father when we were at Pyoktong, after being bombed and on the way to a small valley 10 miles southwest. It was the evening of the 20th of November and I never was so glad to see anyone in my life. He was carrying a stretcher and he carried it for the ten miles. We were carrying about 40 of our men on improvised litters up and down mountains. We would take turns carrying, but Father carried all the way.

"We arrived at this small valley the next morning and all the officers were put into a small Korean farmhouse at the top of the valley. The Chinese and Koreans would not let us go out to see the men but Father would get out and sneak down to the sick and wounded first and then to see the men and say prayers.

"When they died he would get on the burial detail and dig the grave out of the rocky, frozen ground. He did that continuously.

"We were pretty hard up for food and were starving, so Father would go on ration run to get our cracked corn, millet and soy beans. Before he went, he would say prayers to St. Dismas, the Good Thief. They helped, because Father would steal, or get away with, sometimes two one-hundred-pound sacks of grain plus pockets full of salt which was very scarce. Pretty soon all of us were praying earnestly to St. Dismas, but Father succeeded much better than the rest of us.

"Some of the officers would trade their watches, which they managed to save, to the Koreans for tobacco. They would give Father a lot of the tobacco but the next day he would be smoking dried garlic leaves, oak leaves, etc. He had given it all away to the sick and wounded on his visits.

"The Chinese and Koreans always were after him and tried to catch him down the valley. They said he was an agitator and that the men did not want to see him and requested the Chinese to stop his coming. They no more stopped him from going down there than did the men request the Chinese to stop him.

"Every night we held prayers and he prayed not only for deliverance of us from the hands of the enemy, but also prayed for the Communists to be delivered from their atheistic materialism. On January 21, 1951, we were moved back to Yoktong."

A second letter from Lt. Walter Mayo, Jr., on February 11, 1954:

"Dear Father Tonne:

"I believe I left off last time where Father Kapaun was in Pyoktong, Camp 5, and making pots out of sheet iron with a stone as a fashioner. He would then gather scraps of wood, corn shocks and splinters and build fires to boil water to soak the wounds and to drink.

"This was in February of 1951, when it was bitterly cold, about 20° below zero F. He would be up at five or six every morning in the dark and when the whistle blew for us to get up at 7:00 A.M., he would stick his head in the door and holler 'hot coffee' and hand us a nice hot cup of boiled water. People were dying at the rate of ten to twenty a day in the camp. As often as he could he would sneak down past the guards to the enlisted men's section of the camp.

"When our officers were dying he would tend them day and night. He converted Lt. Richard Hangen and baptized him before he died, along with several others. Captain Chester Osborne was converted and baptized with a male Godfather, and a male 'Godmother', Lt. Robert Burke, USAF.

"He always said, however, that he would never try to force anyone or high-pressure anyone to become a Catholic if he thought that there were doubts and reservations in that person's mind.

"By March, 1951, Father had a full-fledged beard and was using a sleeve from a G. I. wool-knit sweater for a stocking cap. His face was drawn and he was very thin. We used to kid him by saying he looked like one of the old, bearded Patriarchs.

"Every evening he went to the five houses in which the officers lived and offered evening prayers. He prayed for our daily material and spiritual needs, for our deliverance and liberation and for the enemy, the Communists, that they be delivered from that terrible scourge and false philosophy.

"He went on like this until April. In their indoctrination program the Chinise would yell and scream about American capitalists and warmongers.

"Father would sit on the mud floor of the farm house and in a soft, calm voice, refute their statements one by one.

"They taunted him by saying:

" 'Where is your God now? Ask Him to get you out of this camp. See if He can feed you. You should thank Mao Tse-Tung and Stalin for your daily bread. You cannot see or hear or feel your God, therefore, he does not exist.'

"Father would reply: 'One day the good Lord will

save the Chinese and free them from the scourge that has set upon them. The good Lord, as He fed the thousands on the mountain, will also take care of us. Mao Tse-Tung could not make a tree or a flower or stop the thunder and lightning.'

"He also told them that his God was as real as the air they breathed but could not see, as the sounds they heard but could not see, as the thoughts and ideas they had and spoke but could not see or feel. After a while, they let him alone since they were afraid of his arguments. He would shame a lot of the English-speaking interpreters (knowing they were missionary-trained) by chastising them when they said religion exploited the masses, etc., and asking them if their missionary teachers had done such things as they alleged.

"Our guards told the enlisted men that he was an agitator and a capitalist propagandist and to have nothing to do with him. The men, God bless them, told the Chinese off in their own inimitable way. The Chinese obstructed Father in every effort to conduct services, but he always managed.

"It was Easter, April, 1951, a cold, raw day, with the wind blowing from Manchuria over the Yalu. The ice was just breaking on the Reservoir. Father had Easter Sunrise Services with the Rosary, Memorare, Stations of the Cross, Mass Prayers, and readings from the Bible and hymns. I will never forget that service as long as I live.

"Father was limping and had a cane, plus a black patch over one eye that had become infected. About 85 officers were sitting on the steps of a bombed-out church in our area. The steps were all that was left of the church. Catholic, Protestant and Jew were there, plus some that had no religion at all, but were starting to find one. There were very few officers whose eyes were not

damp by the time it was over.

"The Chinese raised a stink with Father about it but he told them that they profess freedom of religion and after a while they dropped it.

"Father had his ciborium and corporal, plus his stole and holy oils. He heard many a confession during these months. He held Catholic services on Sunday and then Protestant services. He ministered to all and neglected no one. He rarely complained and when he did it was always about some injustice suffered by someone else. He corrected those who were using profanity and helped to cure many of that habit.

"After the Easter Services we noticed that Father was limping badly and had difficulty moving around. We asked him many times what the matter was, but he would always smile and say that it was just old age creeping up on him.

"We finally had Doctor (Capt.) Clarence Anderson of Long Beach, California, and Doctor (Capt.) Sidney Esensten of Minneapolis, Minnesota, corner him and examine his leg. They found that he had a blood clot in it and that it was swollen from above the knee to the toes and had turned yellow and black.

"They forced him to lie on the floor and put his leg in a makeshift suspension. He lay that way for over a month, never complaining except that he thought he was a burden to people — he that had given everything for everyone else.

"During the six weeks that he lay immobilized he was always cheering the other sick officers and doing everything he could, physically and spiritually, to help them and us.

"We constructed a makeshift toilet inside the building for Father and two other sick people. He had to be

carried to it, inside a closet. He would stay there inside that cold closet for an hour rather than ask anyone to help him. For that reason, we had to be watchful and make sure that he was not left inside.

"The days were growing warmer. It was around May 19. Father's leg was getting a little better. Our doctors said it would be all right to take him outside into the sun. That we did. After a few hours Father grew tired and asked us to bring him back into the room.

"It was about 5:00 P. M. and we were eating our evening bowl of corn when one of the officers came up to the kitchen area where we were eating and told me Father was pretty sick and that he was calling for me.

"I went down to the house and into the room. He was lying on the floor with his head propped up and eating. Doctors Esensten and Anderson were there with Captain Ralph Nardella and W. O. Felix McCool. Father was breathing heavily and talking strangely but rationally. His face was contorted with pain every few minutes and we were all pretty much scared.

"He kept talking about different subjects for about half an hour. He recognized everyone.

"Then Father's face was contorted and the pain must have been terrific because he started to cry. About a minute later he looked up, the tears still rolling down his painracked face, and told us the story of the Seven Macchabes in the Old Testament.

" 'There was an emperor who had an old woman brought up before him. He told her to renounce her Faith or he would torture and kill her. She replied that he could do anything he wanted, but she would not renounce it.

" 'The emperor then had her seven sons brought in and said he would kill them if she did not do as he said. She still refused and he then put them to death one by one.

The old woman was crying and the emperor asked her if she was crying because she was sad. She replied that her tears were tears of joy because she knew her sons were in heaven.'

"Father then looked at us and said he was crying for the same reason. He said that he was glad he was suffering because Our Lord had suffered also and that he felt closer to Him.

"By that time we were all crying, everyone in that room, who had seen scores of people die in the past few months and who thought they were pretty hard.

"Doctors Anderson and Esensten went out of the room for a minute and I went with them. They said Father was all right except that he had become over-tired, and the leg had started to cause a great deal of pain.

"About that time, a Chinaman, an English-speaking officer, and a short, fat Communist, came running into the room and told us they were going to take Father to the hospital.

"First of all, we did not want to let Father go because we were taking care of him and he was getting better. However, the Chinese said he must go. The hospital was a place where they took people to die. Only about five officers out of sixty had ever come back from there.

"The Chinese saw a good chance to get this man they feared, now that he was helpless. They hated him because he had such an influence over all the prisoners. He was a power for good and they hated and feared any power but their own, not to speak of a power exercising good.

"We refused, argued, threatened, pleaded, but to no avail. About half an hour later they came down with a makeshift stretcher. Father knew as soon as this Chinaman named Ku appeared, that he was going to the 'hospital'.

"As they were putting this makeshift stretcher on the ground and telling us to hurry, Father gave me his ciborium, corporal and a list of people he baptized. He said he was keeping his stole and holy oils because he probably would have use for them at the 'hospital'.

"We carried him out of the room and put him on the stretcher. There were two English-speaking Chinese interpreter officers, Sun and Ku. All of us were so mad we would have strangled both of them were it not for Father. We were all crying. Six of the officers were going to carry him on the stretcher. As they raised him up on their shoulders, Father said to me, 'Walt, if I don't come back, tell my Bishop that I died a happy death.' We all told him that he would be back with us soon but he sort of smiled and shook his head and asked us to say a few prayers for him.

"Standing there watching Father being carried off down the hill on that stretcher, I realized I would never see him alive again. I also realized that he knew that more than anyone else.

"Three or four days later, on the 23rd of May, I think, Father died among the men he served, up on a hill overlooking the Yalu River in that communist hospital of death."

A third letter from Lt. Mayo, February 23, 1954:
"Dear Father:

"Sorry to be delayed but we just spent the last week on maneuvers and things were in a rather distraught state. I will pick up the details on the ciborium now.

"When Father was taken away with his holy oils and stole, I kept the corporal and ciborium in my possession. About a week after his death, I attempted to get the holy oils back. I even had a written permission of one of the Chinese interpreters to go to the so-called hospital. How-

ever, this turned out to be a typical commie run-around as they told us up at the 'hospital' that they did not have Father's holy oils nor his stole.

"I later heard that a G. I. had taken them but to this day I still do not know what happened to them. In all probability, the Chinese took the oils for the valuable gold vials as they were doing with all the rings and valuables of the dead Americans.

"I kept the ciborium and corporal until around the 20th of August when I was thrown in solitary for having a movie camera and taking pictures. Someone had informed the Chinese.

"Anyway, Lt. Henry Pedicone of Greensburg, Pennsylvania, a good friend of mine, took the ciborium and corporal and hid them until late October, 1951, when the Chinese found them and took both away from him. This was the time when all the officers were moved to a different camp.

"When I rejoined the officers on October 27, 1951, at Camp 2, I started to ask the Chinese for the ciborium. Lt. Nardella assisted me and we hounded the Chinese. The Chinese insisted that it was Father Kapaun's personal property. We insisted that it belonged to his Bishop. However, our efforts availed us nothing except the Chinese warning us that we were hostile. The next step was solitary.

"In April, 1952, we were outside the building at Camp 2 when the camp commander's daughter walked by. By this time we had more or less given up hope of obtaining the ciborium. In her hands, however, was the same ciborium filled with marbles. Lt. Robert McTaggart and myself tried to take it away but she cried and we had to beat a hasty retreat as her guard was only a few feet away. The girl was only about three or four years old.

"This time we really raised a stink. Lt. Nardella circulated a petition. We hounded the Chinese until finally



Capt. Ralph Nardella, Capt. Joseph L. O'Connor, Lt. Walter Mayo. Taken by A. P. Photographer Frank Noel, in POW Camp #2, early part of 1952. Not seen are W. O. McCool and Capt. Anderson, at this "pow-wow" on the Father Kapaun Memorial Fund and discussion of religious activities.

a month later, the camp commander told Lt. Nardella that he would return the ciborium when we were repatriated.

"We threw up to them the fact that they proclaimed religious freedom and yet were violating their own words. Being very sensitive about that point helped, I think, to force a show of impartiality.

"That was the last I heard of the ciborium until August, 1953, when it was returned to Lt. Nardella. I was moved from the Officers' Camp 2 and put in an annex with other officers in October 1952.

"In August, 1953, they brought us together to take us south to the parallel. It was then that Lt. Nardella had the ciborium given him by the Chinese.

"The corporal disappeared and was never seen after October, 1951. Bishop Griffiths of New York told me that Lt. Nardella gave him the ciborium in November, 1953.

"I had the list of names Father had given me of people he had converted and baptized. This list was to be turned over to the Military Ordinariate. Out of approximately sixty officers who were with him (non-Catholics) about fifteen have, or are being, converted. They all said it was due to Father's very subtle influence. He never tried to force Catholicism on them. However, they said that if a man could live and die that way, then that religion must be the best and only one.

"That's about all, Father. If there are any particulars that you wish elaborated, please let me know as I will be only too happy to oblige. Don't forget to let me know when the book is being published."

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

OUT OF THE HEART, THE MOUTH SPEAKETH

Towering in heroism and self-sacrifice on the bloody battlefield of Korea, the full stature of Father Kapaun as a priest, as a soldier, reached majestic maturity as a captive of the Chinese Reds. Marching and carrying the wounded over the rugged frozen terrain of Korea — housed in primitive barracks, slowly starving, lacking medicines and the bare necessities of life — this devoted chaplain, emaciated and sick himself, rallied, comforted, cheered his fellow prisoners — tired men who no longer wanted to live. Father Kapaun became the counselor, the nurse, the leader, the provider, the defender of his fellow prisoners, even their thief — for he "stole" food to keep his buddies alive.

His example of exquisite charity to all prisoners welded his men into a closely knit group, both before and after his death, revived in despondent hearts the will to live and kept alive the hope of liberation. He resisted calmly but firmly the brain-washing tactics of the Communists, dared to hold daily religious services, gave his men a deep faith in themselves and in the providence and mercy of God. The following letters speak eloquently of the multifold, untiring services of Father Kapaun. He was not to come back, but his fortitude in every trial was the chief factor in the survival and ultimate freedom of hundreds of his fellow P.O.W.'s.

1539 Thalia Avenue
Youngstown, Ohio
February 1, 1954

"Dear Father Tonne:

"I first met Father Kapaun when he was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry, in the fall of 1949. He was the Catholic Chaplain, and Chaplain Carter was the Protestant Chaplain. These two gentlemen, of different faiths, worked together and were exceptionally good friends. They had charge of conducting the character guidance program in the battalion and Father Kapaun was responsible for molding the lives of many boys. All the men looked forward to hearing his talks on the right and wrong approach to life. Men of all faiths would go to him with their problems. I mentioned Chaplain Carter because he was a man like Father Kapaun. Those of us who have been in the Service for some time used to comment how remarkable it was to have these two fine chaplains in the same organization. Both worked for God and all men, and Church attendance improved so that in some cases 100% of the companies would attend their religious services.

"Father Kapaun always talked in language the men understood. He knew their problems and his advice was always the best for all individuals or groups concerned. He visited the sick in hospitals, places where the men went, football games, basketball games, etc. His only interest was serving God and his fellow men.

"Father Kapaun carried on his great work until he died, and of course you know the story about how he stayed with the wounded when he was captured and the story of what he went through. Never once did he think of himself; instead he was always trying to make things just a little more pleasant for his fellow men. When others were complaining, he took everything in stride and

never mentioned his worries or sickness. On many occasions it was quite obvious that certain individuals would take advantage of his generosity, but he never complained.

"His guidance was probably the contributing factor in many of us coming back. I used to ask Father why he didn't rest. He was not getting enough to eat to keep him going for the amount of work he was doing. He would reply 'I enjoy helping people that need help; my reward is happiness' (or words to that effect).

"After he became sick and was lying prostrate, slowly starving, with such pain in his leg that only God knows how he suffered, people would seek his advice, but he never complained. I was captured about the same time he was, slept beside him in the same room, ate with him, worked with him, and had many inspiring talks with him. It is difficult for me to find words to express my admiration for him. We used to talk for hours at a time about people and why some acted one way and others acted differently about their fellow men. He used to say, 'there is good in all men'; and when some of us could not find the good, Father Kapaun would always find it.

"I know I haven't given you very much information, but I can assure you, Father Tonne, whatever is said about Father Kapaun will never be enough, and if I can be of any help to you in getting more information, don't hesitate to write. Perhaps there is some particular incident of which you might have some knowledge on which I could elaborate.

"I sincerely hope that a movie can be made to portray this wonderful man, as I believe it would contribute to the nation, in these days of turmoil and unrest, a real story that would be heart-warming and give the people a chance to see the sacrifices that were made to keep this country of ours free from the terrors of Communism.

"Hoping that I can be of more service to you, I remain,

Sincerely"

William A. McClain,
Captain, Infantry."

Captain Joseph O'Connor wrote his recollections February 15, 1954:

"Dear Father:

"Am most sorry that I did not have an opportunity to answer your request previous to this time. Have been in the hospital since my return and kept very busy with public appearances, when physically able, and recuperation from the rigors of 34 months of captivity. There is quite a lot that I would like to add to previous published accounts of Father Kapaun. However, my limited ability restricts such writings. How can one express in words what one feels in his heart for the man who has contributed life and values to one? Father Kapaun actually did that to me by his example, his sermons, and above all, through his heart to heart talks that he and I personally had at times when I was ready and willing to give up.

"My first recollection of Father Kapaun as a fearless individual, that is, fearless of man-made obstacles, occurred in September of 1950. He came to me when I was in charge of setting up headquarters and asked if he could say Mass for the men in that area at that time. I said, 'Father, things are pretty hot here at present and I don't think you should be up here.' We had been getting interdicting artillery fire in and around that position for a few hours previously. Father said, 'Then I think we need a Mass, Captain, and if you can spare the men for a few minutes, I'll say it.' I finally told him that I'd go along and allow as many Catholics as possible to attend, and picked out a spot in an abandoned Korean houseyard and asked him if that would be satisfactory. He said that

it would, and he proceeded to offer Mass. I attended. During the Mass the North Koreans opened up on us with artillery. Rounds were hitting the top of the hill about 150 yards to the rear of us. We didn't know if we were under actual observation or not, but assumed as much, and all of us were highly nervous and ready to seek cover, but Father continued the Mass. The look on his face — a look I can't describe, a look of saintliness or maybe one of unassumed dignity — one of a man so engrossed in the Holy Sacrifice that he was oblivious of what was happening — dispelled our fears. Not a man moved. Had we been under direct observation, and I believe we were, we had what is known in the service as a bracket of us, and it was only a small matter for the enemy to make the proper range adjustment to eliminate us. A heavy barrage of fire hit about 400 yards to our left and then ceased. I think that this barrage was intended for us and through some miraculous power was deflected. After Mass, Father Kapaun thanked me and asked if I could find him a ride to the next battalion. He had lost his jeep in enemy fire. He hated to impose on me. I gladly managed to find a jeep and sent him happily out of that area.

"Another noteworthy incident that I'm sure such a humble man as Father would never want repeated because it had a tendency to glorify him as an individual, and he never wanted that, follows:

"This happened in Anson, South Korea. Anson had been occupied by the North Korean Communist Forces from about early July, 1950, until our battalion was liberated in the latter part of September, 1950. Previous to the Communist capture of Anson, there were quite a few Christian missions there and one of them was a lovely (comparatively speaking) Catholic Mission. We secured the town late that evening and the following morning

Father Kapaun held Mass in the Catholic Mission which had been ransacked by the Commies. All things of value, all holy pictures, and all furniture had been removed. Father set up his field Mass equipment on the old altar. Many townspeople were in attendance. After he finished Mass, which I believe I served that day, we were in what used to be the vestibule, and heard a commotion. The native Koreans were coming to thank Father. In their own language and in their own way, they wanted to express their feelings toward him and the U. N. for restoring their right to worship. Many kissed his feet and his garments and wept over him. Father was embarrassed beyond words and happy to the point that he began to weep. After he gave them his blessing, they left. Father then told us how fortunate he was to be able to restore something to those people that they thought they had lost, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. He also expressed his feeling in the faith these people maintained during their occupation. He told us to let that be an example to us that we should never lose our faith. Little did I realize that later I would be put into a position where, had it not been for his example and teachings, I could very easily have lost faith in God and mankind.

"Another point was Father's attitude toward those men who died in the earlier stages of the war. After we had occupied Pyongyang, North Korea, and had thought the war was over, Father was attached to our battalion for rations, etc. Normally, when he was in our outfit he would be around taking care of the spiritual and moral needs of the men. During this period he was conspicuous by his absence and quite frequently was late for, or missed his meals. I was naturally curious and asked him what was going on. He said he had a lot of administrative work to do. I asked him if I could get one or two of the men to help him. He refused, saying that this was something

he had to do personally. Shortly after, I found him in a dilapidated and abandoned Korean hut adjacent to the large building the battalion occupied. He had an old ammo crate for a desk and an ammunition box for a seat. He had approximately five to six hundred cards of men who were killed or who had died while in combat. Also, on each card he had the address of the next of kin and a notation as to whether or not he had administered the last rites to the individuals. He was writing a personal letter to each of the next of kin. This, to the best of my knowledge, is definitely not required of an Army Chaplain. Father Kapaun and the Protestant Chaplain, Captain Carter, were taking it upon themselves to do this so as to better ease the minds of friends and relatives of the deceased. The building Father used had holes in it and was extremely cold. I asked him why he didn't request office space from me in battalion headquarters. He thought I was too busy and he didn't want to interfere with my work. That is the type of man that he was. He would ask for nothing and give everything, even his life.

"Father, if you are in contact with Father Kapaun's parents tell them they had a son they can be proud of and that I remember them and him in my prayers. I will write them a personal letter in the near future.

Gratefully yours,
Joseph L. O'Connor
Captain, Infantry
Arch & Cedar Streets
Spring City, Pennsylvania

From Captain Robert E. Burke, Alexandria, Virginia, February 8, 1954:

"Your recent letter was forwarded to me by my wife at our home in West Virginia and I was pleased to learn of your plan to write the life of our dear friend, Father Kapaun.

"Unfortunately, I have been unable to do any reading as I went almost completely blind from lack of vitamins due to malnutrition while in captivity. My sight returned slightly when I first returned home, but then leveled off and lately there has been no change so that is why I am at this present locale, Walter Reed Hospital, on quarters status while awaiting action of the Retirement Board as I am to be medically retired with disability pension in the near future. I realize, too, that you are not writing a story about me, but I felt an explanation was necessary since I have not read any of the articles about our very dear priest but it certainly isn't because of lack of interest on my part. I feel that everything has been said about Father Kapaun that could possibly be said. However, I'll relate a few salient points that impressed me most.

"Father Kapaun gave you a good impression upon first meeting and if you lived to be a hundred, your opinion would never change. I met him in late November, 1950, after five days of torturous marching in bitter cold weather. Upon arriving at a small valley completely exhausted, half-frozen, half-starved and thoroughly disheartened, and possessed with the idea that death would be so welcome, much better than our present existence, at this very critical point as we approached the house where we were to be interned, the sun appeared and soon the clouds completely disappeared. The sun referred to was not the celestial body but the warm, friendly greeting of this MAN of God. With a big, broad grin he extended his hand and said, 'My name is Kapaun, glad to have you share our paradise.' His calm, easy manner and winning smile soon relaxed us and his words of encouragement gave us new hope and the clouds of dismay and disappointment soon disappeared and our heavy hearts became lighter, our aching feet and numb fingers and tired bodies didn't seem to hurt so much now. His help in getting us

fed and bedded down were just a few of the many kindnesses and considerations displayed by him that night. We all knew that this man was a real friend. We weren't wrong, because in the tough times that followed we could always look to our priest for guidance, leadership and encouragement. He kept our spirits bright and our morale high. He gave us many a laugh when laughter was hard to come by, with his witty remarks and his methods for obtaining more chow to supplement our starvation ration. We very affectionately honored him with the title 'best thief in the compound'. He was forever sticking his neck out to 'borrow' extra food, to visit the men further down the valley and give them moral support in these very trying times.

"Later, by February and March, the majority of us had turned into animals, were fighting for food, irritable, selfish, miserly, etc. The good priest continued to keep a cool head, conduct himself as a human being, and maintain all his virtues and ideal characteristics. When the chips were down, Father proved himself to be the greatest example of manhood I've ever seen in my life. At trying times like these, the men are separated from the boys, the weeds from the wheat, and, although not every man slipped into primitive and savage existence, our good priest stood head and shoulders above everyone.

"When most of us were down on our backs and a siege of dysentery swept the area, our benevolent padre would go out into the sub-zero temperatures at 5:30 searching for small twigs and pieces of wood, build a fire and carry water to fill the pans he diligently made of old pieces of sheet iron and then remove dirty trousers from the men who no longer could control their natural functions. After boiling this clothing and getting it dry, he would dress the pathetic hulks of skin and bones. The faint heart would become a little more audible, a spark of life light

up in their hollow eyes and the 'death stare' would vanish as the corner of their mouths would turn up and a smile would appear on their tortured faces. A movement of the Adam's apple on a scrawny neck would give away the lump in the throat that comes when one experiences a sentimental moment; one would swallow hard and with tears in the eyes, would manage to offer, 'Thanks, Father.'

"Gestures like this repeated morning after morning, washing clothes, bathing the body and a few well chosen words (he always knew just the right thing to say at the right time) nursed countless men back to health and today these men are home with their mothers and fathers, their sweethearts, their wives and children, their families. I'm sure these families and loved ones all know the story. Every man is proud to say, 'I knew Father Kapaun — he saved my life, he made me fight to stay alive when dying was so simple; it was easier to die than live in those days; death was a welcome relief. We owe our present happiness to that heroic man who gave his all, who sacrificed himself for his fellow man, who worked himself to death. Although ailing himself, he labored to comfort the sick; he now lies in a shallow, rocky grave in far off stinking Korea.'

"He was an inspiration to men of all races, nationalities and creeds; even those who professed to be atheist held him in their hearts and affectionately called him 'Father'. Those who had strayed from their church and religion were brought back to God and certainly must now be stout Christians, who remember their beloved priest in their prayers. Whether they be recognized popular prayers or simple ones in crude language, I'm sure they all ask our Lord to look after 'Our Buddy' up there, and although it's not said in flowing terms, the Almighty knows what is in the hearts of these men.

"This man who was held in such high esteem, respected, admired and loved, was a real threat to our Communist

captors. They could bully us around and practice their theory of 'the means justifying the end, etc.' They didn't know quite how to handle the priest, because he could not be scared, threatened, cajoled, or humiliated. On the contrary, they feared this man whom they couldn't break, they trembled at the control and influence he had with all the men. It worried them that this man could be so powerful with just his mild manner and soft speech where they resorted to screaming, threatening with all forms of sadistic torture known to these barbarians, and still couldn't influence us like this man of God.

"They couldn't take him out and shoot him because they feared a rebellion, so they waited until illness and over-work finally got the best of this stalwart soul. They took him off to the hospital, (I use the word hospital very loosely) where he was murdered because they denied him the medicine he needed, although it was available for the traitorous collaboraters who played into their hands and sold themselves to the devil.

"So ends the epic of the greatest man I ever knew, the 'guy' that we all rank above our own father, as much as we love our parent, the man who was tops in everybody's book, the man whom no man can say anything against, can say nothing but good about — our beloved chaplain. The man of the cloth who treated all men alike, administered the last rites to the dying — Catholic, Protestant and Jewish — because they wanted Father's blessing as they left this earth; the man who taught Catechism to those in earnest, some of whom were baptized by him in a simple ceremony, one in particular who lived for the day when he could walk into the church with his pretty Catholic wife and lovely twin daughters and make them so happy that their loved one had joined the church of their faith. This convert has often remarked that it was the greatest thing that ever happened to him. I personally

am proud of this convert because I'm his Godfather. Another officer, now deceased, was his 'Godmother', and, with Father now gone, it leaves just the two of us from this memorable ceremony of Easter Sunday, 1951. The same Sunday Father heard our confessions and cried as he apologized for not being able to give us Communion.

"This is how I remember the finest man I ever knew, the most outstanding priest I've ever seen, the hero of heroes, and to put it simply, 'the most unforgettable character I've ever met', that diamond in the rough that we all would be proud to call Dad, the man we respect and admire and cherish in our hearts — our beloved Father Kapaun.

"I regret that I cannot phrase the thoughts and feelings I'm trying to convey and with all due respect to you, Father Tonne, you cannot possibly portray this priest as gloriously and illustriously as to do him justice. There are no words to describe the magnitude of this brilliant shining star, our guiding light.

"I sincerely hope that this information will in some small way help you, and I consider it a real honor and pleasure that you wrote me. If I can be of assistance in the future, please don't hesitate to call on me. May His Soul Rest in Peace and God Bless Him!

Respectfully,
Robert E. Burke"

From another prisoner, Felix McCool, comes this letter:

"Dear Father Tonne:

"Father Kapaun would hold evening devotions for all of us, and would always preface it with: 'Gentlemen, Evening prayer!' An immediate hush would fall and everyone would listen to the 'Our Father Who art in Heaven, — give us this day our daily bread'. Here every-

one would remember bread as we had known it. I remember how my mother used to say, 'Sonny, don't waste your bread for someday you may be in need!' The prayer would continue to the Catholic ending and then to the Protestant ending. He was for all of us and showed it in all his actions. He went to the death house and gave the last rites to all of the dying men, men who might have been saved had they had proper food. Father Kapaun would care for the extremely sick in the death house and then come back with sticks that he had picked up from the debris for heating water. The dysentery could be whipped in this manner only — hot water and quiet. A lot of the runs were caused by a psychological reaction. Men just couldn't accept the fact that they were prisoners. I had just arrived from a 300-400 mile hike to this place, Pyockdong Hi #5 Korea.

"One day I asked Walt Mayo, the boy from Boston College: 'Say old man, is there a Catholic priest here in the camp? I haven't been to confession for a long time and it doesn't look as if I will.'

"Mayo replied: 'Look over there in that burned out building. You'll see a man rummaging around in the debris. That's Father Kapaun. He was the Chaplain in the outfit that I was captured in.'

"I looked and saw the priest he was talking about. He had a black patch over one eye and a stocking cap over his ears. It was bitter cold. I approached him and said, 'Father!' He looked up and smiled. His eyes were watering from the blackened soot or from emotion, as he said to me:

" 'Look here in this cellar. There is a water crock. We can keep water in that and have it boiled and sanitary. Maybe so many men won't die from drinking filthy water.'

"The crock had a dead rat in it but that wasn't any-

thing to us. It could have been a dead Korean and not made any difference.

" 'Wait a minute, Father,' I said, 'I'll drop down into the hole and pull it out for you, as you don't look as if you can do it.'

"I dropped into the hole but it was too small for the crock to come out as the bombing had twisted the cellar out of shape. I looked up; the sky was cold, clear blue and his face was framed in the hole, looking down with a woe-begone expression. I assured him:

" 'It isn't so bad. Pull off some of these boards and dirt, so I can maneuver the crock through the hole.' He began, but the dirt started falling into the hole, nearly covering me up. Then catastrophe — a large rock started to fall. He tried to stop it by deliberately placing his foot in its path. It bruised him horribly, and may have been the start of the clot that later formed in his leg. The rock came crashing through and hit the rim of the crock, cracking off a portion. What a disappointment for him! He called Hank Petticone. Between them they were able to clear the hole so that I might get out. We worked the balance of the afternoon carefully removing the debris and were finally able to remove the crock. It wasn't as good as we had hoped, but it served the purpose. Father Kapaun would boil water and place it in this container so that the sick could have a drink of pure water. The well men had to fend for themselves, but could always mooch a drink off Father by giving him some sticks to burn.

"I saw his helmet liner lying in the yard and I asked him about it. It still had the Cross marked on the front in white lettering. He explained:

" 'Mac, if I wear it, it will only antagonize the Chinese, so I won't; but the fact that it is lying on this garbage heap, causes every man to see it and it reminds them of

their God. You know, Mac, I often wonder just how many silent prayers are offered at this old heap. God moves in strange ways.'

"The helmet liner lay through the cold weather and the spring rains, rolling and turning in the wind and rain; I could see it from the door. He left us to go to his God, but the old liner lay there. I finally kicked it around the house and broke it up, tearing the cross from the broken parts, and hid it. I brought it home and sent it to the Father Kapaun Memorial Fund, 58 Ellison Street, Paterson, New Jersey. Ralph Nardella said he'd see that it got to his church.

"He was a MAN of God. He ministered to all — Catholics, Protestants, Mohammedans, and Jews. He would hold evening prayers, wash the clothes of the sick and hear confessions. All this while he was slowly being eaten by disease caused by lack of proper food, sanitation and clothing.

"In his last hour he heard my confession and told me to dedicate my life to the Blessed Virgin Mary, that she would intercede for me to Jesus, her Son. He told all of us the story of the Seven Macabees. A mother had seven children, all of whom refused to repudiate God to the king. One by one they were killed. She cried, not tears of pain and privation, but tears of joy. Her children were with God. As he told us this, his own eyes were filled with tears of agony, I knew — and he knew I knew!

Father Kapaun said, 'As you see, I am crying too, not tears of pain but tears of joy, because I'll be with my God in a short time.'

"Before they took him away, he made a request of me which I never told his close friends as they all had such a protective attitude toward him that I felt it might hurt their feelings — his requesting a thing of that magnitude from one who was almost a stranger and a Marine. I

know you understand. It is quite close to *me.* The request was this: '*When I die,* say the last rites over my grave.' They never let me. They spirited him away. He died in agony, the agony of Christ on the Cross. We never had the privilege of knowing where he was buried in that cold ground, not even the comforting thought of a coffin.

"After his death, we grew into a solid group — Catholics, Protestants, Jews, Mohammedans, and men of all races — fighting the Communists.

"Lt. Ray M. Dowe, Jr., 3221 Arlington Blvd., Arlington, Virginia, was the officer whom Father Kapaun spoke last to just as they carried him out of the yard. He said, 'Mike, I'll come back and kick the so-and-so out of you,' just kidding. Mike remembers him so vividly that if one mentions Kapaun, tears come to his eyes.

Yours,

Felix McCool"

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

"HE WAS TRANSFIGURED BEFORE THEM"

"Father Kapaun began physically to look like Christ," is the surprising statement made by Major David MacGhee, in an article in COLLIER'S MAGAZINE for January 22, 1954. Major MacGhee, American airman, prisoner for thirty months, described Chaplain Kapaun as "by far the greatest man I ever met," and adds that "he came close to saintliness."

Major MacGhee, a staunch Unitarian, admits: "Until I met this tall, slender First Cavalry Division chaplain from Kansas, I had, if anything a slight anti-Catholic bias."

He supports the statements made by scores of other prisoners that Father "gave himself unsparingly to his fellow men"; carrying a wounded man on a stretcher for more than 100 miles; holding religious services despite dire threats, washing the clothes of the sick; bathing their bodies; giving of his own meagre food allowance; assisting the dying of all denominations; sharing the pipe tobacco which he enjoyed so much.

The Major tells how the Communists persecuted the priest more than others, adding: "As time went by, a strange transformation occurred in the chaplain's appearance, he began physically to look like Christ.

"His features became more and more ascetic through emaciation, and his long straggly hair and beard actually changed to reddish-brown. The resemblance was not the

product of any one man's imagination; it was so pronounced that the men kidded him about it." The chaplain would turn away "in an agony of embarrassment."

Of Father Kapaun's death he says: "He ruptured a vein in his leg and a blood clot formed. He went to the hospital and Anderson and Esensten, our two doctors, begged the Chinese to let them amputate. They refused: 'Let God save him! He's a man of God!' "

"The most unselfish man I've ever known," is the description of Father Kapaun given by Master Sgt. Gilbert Christie, a non-Catholic from Montezuma, Indiana, and a fellow prisoner with the priest in "Death Valley", provisional camp between Unsan and Pyoktong.

"It made no difference to Father Kapaun whether a man was Protestant or Catholic," said Christie. "He was just as good to me as to others. When winter got extremely cold he gave me some of his own clothing.

"When others were getting meaner the priest was only kinder. The longer we were in the valley the rougher it got, and the rougher it got, the gentler Father Kapaun became."

"Toward the end, Father Kapaun grew a beard. I've heard men remark he looked just like pictures they had seen of Christ."

Other men, later released, including non-Catholics, testified in similar terms of Father Kapaun's Christ-like kindness and appearance. "We shall always reverently cherish his memory," is the ever-recurring praise of the men who knew him.

In a personal interview in Wichita, Frank Noel, famous war correspondent for the Associated Press, gave Bishop Carroll a most vivid, realistic acount of Father Kapaun's heroic charity in the Korean compound, where both were prisoners. He spoke of the untiring self-sacrifice of the

saintly priest and of his incredible skill in fashioning utility vessels of every description.

Noel explained to Bishop Carroll how American prisoners were systematically and ingeniously tortured. "The Communists were too subtle," he said, "to take a man out and shoot him. Instead they attempted to get the same results by malnutrition, withholding of medicines, and by psychological punishment."

"Lack of salt was the worst thing," continued Noel. "I didn't know how hungry the body could get for salt. Lack of tobacco causes a few bad days. You don't notice a lack of sugar, and coffee doesn't mean anything. But without salt you get pellagra, beriberi and ulcers."

"Father Kapaun's death," Noel said, "could have been prevented if he had been given even fundamental medical care. The chaplain had two strikes against him to begin with. Of all the prisoners of war, he was treated the worst. Prisoners who refused to embrace the Communist philosophy were often put in a 'hole' (solitary), a pit so small that it was impossible for any human to stand or sit in comfort. I know this from bitter experience."

"He was constantly out among the enlisted men," declared Lt. Mayo. "He gave the last rites to many dying men. He buried the dead with or without the permission of the Communists.

"One Chinese interpreter who had been educated in an Episcopalian college used to call him 'Father'. The Communists didn't like it and removed the man."

Captain Sidney Esensten from Minneapolis, Army Doctor with the 7th Infantry Regiment, the "Wolfhounds", told about Father Kapaun's death:

"I am a Jew, but I felt the greatness of the man, regardless of religion. About the second week of April, his leg became swollen. He forced himself to walk, but

with much pain. He didn't come to see me until two weeks after the onset. When I saw him, he had phlebitis, a blood clot. I insisted that he rest his leg. In two or three weeks, the swelling went down.

"About ten days before he died, he could stand and take a few steps. But four or five days later, he got dysentery. We put him back to rest. The dysentery subsided, but then he got a pain in his chest and fever. It was pneumonia. The Chinese insisted on moving him to the 'hospital' away from our care. He died there May 23.

"I didn't get to know Father Kapaun as well as did Dr. Anderson, but I wholeheartedly agree with him. Father Kapaun was a great spiritual leader and a terrific moral influence in our group."

Captain Clarence L. Anderson, Army doctor from Long Beach, California, had served with Father Kapaun in the same battalion and had been taken prisoner in the same action. Not a Catholic, he describes the priest in these words.:

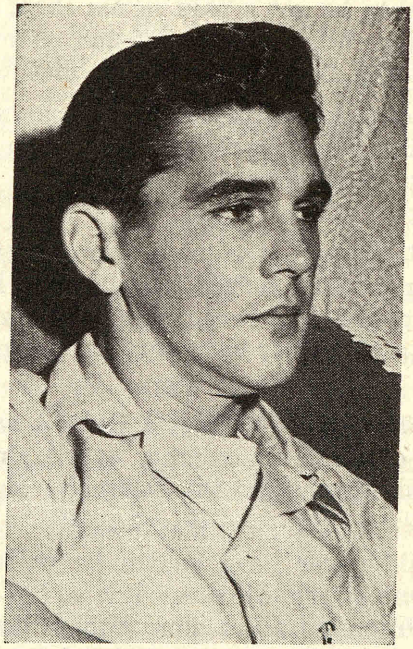
"More than a human being, a hero, a saint — Father Kapaun was at first an enigma, as all simple men are. You wondered why he did the things he did.

"The day they carried him away to the hospital to die, you would never have known he was in pain. His face was serene, his voice calm. But as his doctor, I knew he was suffering. He was a man without personal motives, without any regard for his personal safety or comfort. He simply did what his moral and ethical code told him was his duty.

"He totally disregarded danger. He felt that as long as God wanted him to go on caring for the battle victims nothing would happen to him. His perfect peace of mind was a tremendous influence on the morale of the troops before and after capture. With just a few words of

assurance and with his constant example of devotion to the men's welfare, he was especially effective among those whom imprisonment had demoralized.

"He knew he was going to die when he was taken off to the hospital. He went out with a smile on his face and waved to the fellows standing around. He must have



Captain Anderson

had constant severe pain, but he did not utter a word of complaint.

"To my knowledge, there's no one who ever heard him speak harshly of any person. When he died we all had a marked feeling of loss. He hated Communism, and he hated what the Communist ideology made the Chinese do.

But he did not hate the Chinese. As he left, he asked the Chinese officer in charge, a snaky-looking and acting person who could provoke only revulsion — he asked this fellow to forgive him whatever wrongs he might have done. I could not understand why Father Kapaun would ask this fellow's forgiveness, until I figured out that, after all, it hadn't been easy for him not to hate his captors. He is a man I cannot even think about without a profound feeling of reverence."

Among the members of the ten-man committee who pledged during their imprisonment to establish a memorial for the revered priest, Doctor Anderson gave no hint that he himself voluntarily accepted capture in order to be with the wounded and that his fellow POWs have lavishly lauded the doctor's devotion and bravery. Captain Anderson's black hair is gradually returning, after turning white during captivity.

Bishop William R. Arnold is responsible for the beautiful tribute to Father Kapaun published in the 1953 Annual Report (November) of the Catholic Military Ordinariate in New York City.

LIFE ALONG THE YALU

"When one year ago we reported, we gave the last available information concerning Father Emil J. Kapaun of the Diocese of Wichita. We knew that he had been taken a prisoner of war about 3 November, 1950. Some twenty of the soldiers who had been taken prisoner with him were able to escape and get back to United Nations lines. These soldiers recounted that Father Kapaun also might have escaped with them. However, he had chosen to stay with his brother captives. We cannot say that he did not know the fate which was awaiting him. His knowledge of Red techniques was already fairly broad. Yet undaunted, he went with his men on the death march. Without sufficient food or clothing, he plodded along with

them ever northward, in the bitter winter, wondering when they would reach their final rat hole of a prison. When they ultimately came to the sub-arctic concentration point, Father Kapaun was happy to be with his incarcerated men. He suffered all their privations. He was recognized as a spiritual leader, and as such, was ridiculed and even penalized. Secretly, he conducted religious services, (overtly on Easter 1951), for his fellow prisoners to keep operative their faith and hope in God; fanning the spark of future liberation.

"For six months he lived the life of the early catacombs with men who will never forget his example. Bit by bit he was beaten down physically. His strength began to ebb. His men saw him slipping from them. When he could no longer stand, his captives decided that he should be shifted to the filthy lazaret which they called a 'hospital'. Father Kapaun had but few treasures left — the sacred pyx, which he kept close always to his priestly breast on the battlefield — his holy oils — daily missal from which he read prayers, the epistles and gospels to his fellow prisoners. He took the pyx and handed it to Captain Nardella from Paterson, New Jersey, and requested him to bring it back to the Military Ordinariate.

"Through all the days of durance along the Yalu River, the Captain managed by some clever maneuverings to cherish and preserve the gold pyx. Just about a month ago he brought it through the gates of Freedom Village in Panmunjom and a few weeks ago placed it in our hands at the Military Ordinariate. He told us how Father Kapaun had passed away in pain and loneliness, spiritually unassisted, in May 1951 by the banks of the Yalu River. As we accepted the pyx, we felt that we were receiving a relic just as sacred as though it had come from the blood spattered hands of a Polycarp or an Irenaeus. For martyr's blood was on the battered, gilded cup."

Thus another martyred shepherd who had intimately known his own — even as they knew him — laid down his life for his sheep. Father Kapaun's body lies in a common, unmarked grave somewhere near the 'hospital' where his valiant and saintly soul met his divine Commander-in-Chief in eternal embrace.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

WE CALLED IT "CHRIST IN BARBED WIRE"

Those who had loved ones captured in the Korean Conflict, constantly wondered and pondered over their fate. Little did they realize the full impact of sadistic brutality upon our American Prisoners of War. The barracks which housed them were but filthy hovels; the food fit only for animals; the medicine, none; ordinary comforts of life, absent completely. Above all, little did they think that our Prisoners would be daily subjected to Communistic brain-washing. Captain Ralph A. Nardella states that classes were held almost daily from 8:00 to 12:00 noon and from 2:00 to 5:00 P. M. in Communistic Philosophy. Broken physically, many of these soldiers had to have a strong mind and virile faith not to have collapsed completely before a terrific barrage of lies about the American economic system, and other vital social questions.

Then, too, there was the pain of prolonged separation from their loved ones at home. Imagine, not even a post-card or a letter of encouragement from the home front in three years. Our Prisoners of War were not permitted to write, even of the fact that they were alive. Always the dull and monotonous routine of every day — whistle to awaken the men, the roll call, the two meals of corn which seldom varied, Communistic classes, and then welcome sleep after a dull, listless day.

At last there were the hopeful indications of a truce between the Reds and representatives of the United

Nations. Peace talks were planned and these dragged on for many months before an amicable agreement could be reached. As these peace talks sputtered and stalled, there were varied and vague reports about how many Prisoners would be returned to the United States Armed Forces. Parents, wives and sweethearts in an agony of waiting were hopeful that their loved ones had the mental and physical stamina to survive Communistic brutality.

Finally came the happy day of the truce and the negotiations for the exchange of prisoners. Freedom Village was constructed to receive our repatriated soldiers. Food, clothing, delicacies, medicines were prepared in abundance to welcome to freedom once more — tired, emaciated, broken men.

When the Big Switch operation began, millions of Americans listened with rapt attention to hear over the radio the litany of heroic men who had survived. As names were announced by radio commentators, there was, of course, unbounded joy in the homes of those whose dear ones came back — in other homes only gloom, sorrow and bitter disappointment.

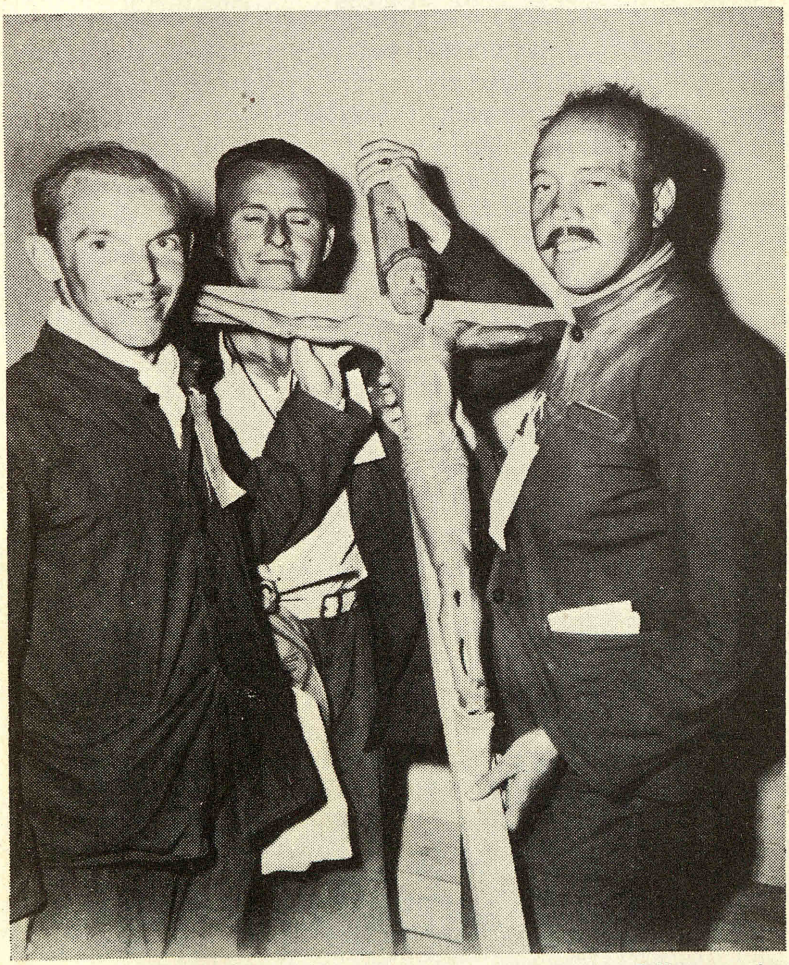
Among the sorely distressed were Enos and Elizabeth Kapaun. These dear parents loved their son deeply. He was always the ideal boy, the reverent son, one who during his life had never given them a moment of worry. As a student, as a priest, as a soldier, he had kept in close touch with his parents through the medium of numerous letters. From the fact that Father Kapaun had not written them since October of 1950 (almost two years had elapsed) they were quite certain that their son was dead. Yet day after day they went to the rural mailbox which is just a few feet away from their home on a Kansas farm road, always confident that there would be some message of hope. Finally came that dread telegram of death: "I am writing you concerning your son, Chaplain (Captain) Emil

J. Kapaun, reported missing in action. . . . Chaplain Kapaun died May 5, 1951, at Pyoktong, North Korea . . . " Despite their strong Catholic faith, Enos and Elizabeth Kapaun were grief stricken. Dark clouds of sadness settled over their minds and hearts.

Mr. and Mrs. Kapaun were consoled by the thought of the Crucified Christ all during their long agony of waiting. Christ indeed had placed a heavy cross on their shoulders because the death of their Chaplain son was the first in their immediate family. The clouds of sadness and sorrow were to be dissipated by one of the most unusual memorials ever given to mortal man. Because Father Emil had "spoken, acted and looked like Christ", his grateful family of soldiers decided to carve a crucifix in hallowed memory of their Chaplain. There have been many beautiful memorials erected to Chaplains before — there is the statue of Father Abram Ryan of Civil War fame—Father Duffy of the Fighting 69th of New York— the beautiful Chapel honoring the four heroic Chaplains who went down on the Dorchester. These fitting memorials to truly great men were completely overshadowed by the simple memorial dedicated to Father Kapaun—conceived and completed in a North Korean Prison Camp—a crucifix!

That exquisite crucifix was brought into Freedom Village on the last day of the prisoner exchange by four close friends of Father: Captain Ralph Nardella of Norfolk, Virginia; Captain Joseph OConnor of Spring City, Pennsylvania; Lt. Paul O'Dowd of Berkeley, California; and W. O. Felix McCool, Marine of Glendale, California.

Garbed in POW baggy blue, the quartet walked as a unit, with Nardella carrying the three foot crucifix, a privilege accorded him by common consent, as he had taken over religious services after Father's death. The Communist captors had hated this layman just as much



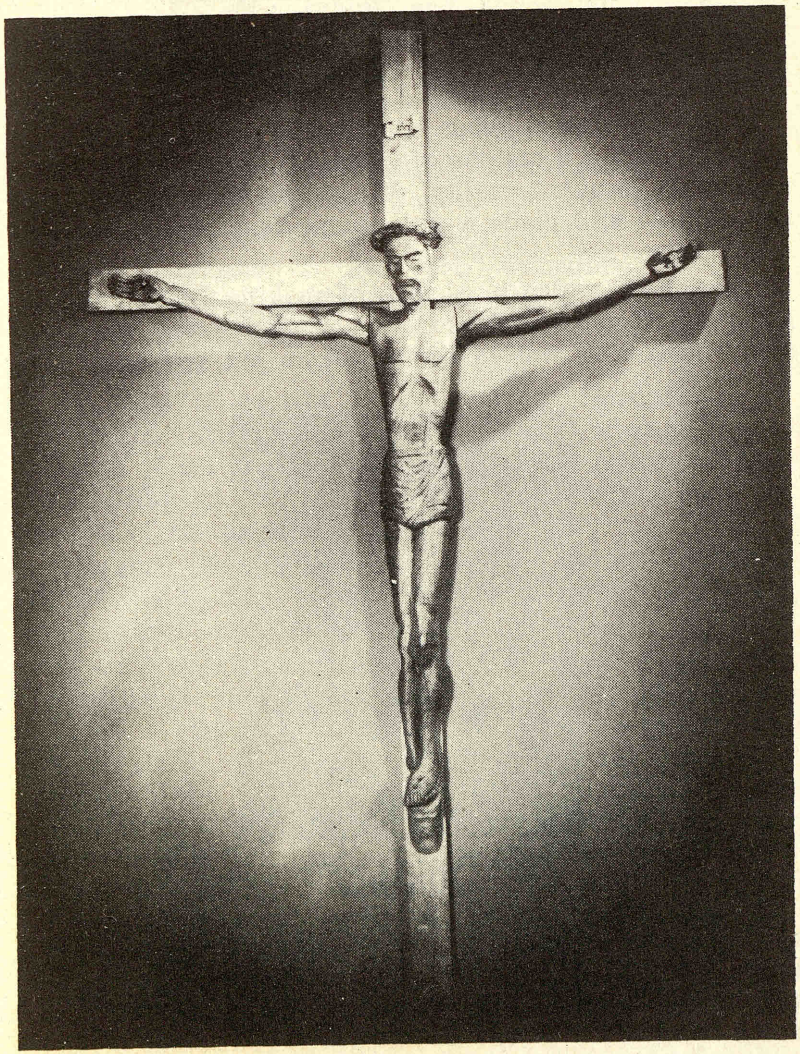
Capt. O'Connor, Warrant Officer McCool and Capt. Nardella, carrying the crucifix into Freedom Village. (Wide World Photo)

as they hated the priest. Nardella had been captured about the same time, and was with the priest-hero almost to the day he died. When Father realized that his last illness was upon him, he asked Nardella to continue the religious services, especially saying the Rosary and missal prayers in the prison camp. Nardella promised. He kept his sacred promise! The other prisoners of all faiths and beliefs and of no belief gave him full cooperation. Admiration for their priest friend and respect for his memory bound them together as one family.

In tribute to their chaplain, they decided to carve a crucifix. The work was done by Major Gerald Fink, a Marine fighter pilot of Chicago. Fink, a Jew, has unbounded esteem for Father Kapaun. In a recent letter, Nardella tells about this precious memorial:

"The crucifix was made out of firewood and it took Gerry Fink about two and a half months to complete it. Before embarking on this project, Gerry had to fashion his own tools. He made a knife out of the steel arch support of a discarded army boot, a chisel out of a drain pipe bracket, and a mallet. The wood was selected from the pile, which we used for fuel, after many days of searching for a suitable piece. The corpus stands about 26 inches high and is made from scrub oak. The cross stands about 40 inches high and is made from cherrywood. His crown of thorns, resembling barb wire, was made from old scrap pieces of radio wire. We entitled it 'Christ in Barbed Wire'. Most of the carving was done during daylight hours and without the permission of the guards.

"Ever since the crucifix was made, I used it, suspended from the ceiling, during our services. Some Chinese showed it respect. Others, who had no Christian contacts, just gaped at it. The Communists were unwilling to let me bring it along. I had to haggle and argue to get it



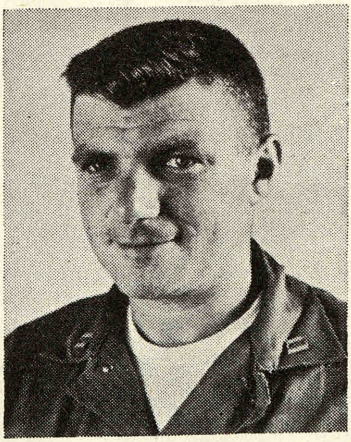
Carved in a Communist prison camp by a Jew in memory of Father Kapaun

out. They referred it to 'higher headquarters' before I got permission."

It is gratifying to hear these heroic men praise one another. Gerry Fink says of Nardella:

"He was always doing something helpful. He got the idea of making a stethoscope for our doctors. He found wood with resonant quality. We swiped some tubing from the Chinese and made a stethoscope that the doctors put to good use.

"Ralph was also in charge of making baseballs. We got some Korean corkwood and leather from worn out army boots and woolen threads from old sweaters. We



Major Fink, the Marine who did the carving

made six professional style balls before we ran out of old boots. We also built a wheelbarrow for the kitchen, but the Chinese took it away from us. Nardella did all the brain work. He is one of the finest Christian officers I've ever met. It took a real man to practice his religion in a prison camp in face of constant opposition."

But Fink's own brains and hands were not idle. According to one POW he fashioned a wooden leg for a colonel whose limb was shot off in battle. The officer walked around on it quite comfortably. Fink also carved out some baseball bats. But the remarkable feat of Fink is that this officer so laboriously whittled, with primitive tools, a corpus of the crucified Christ and gave it the expression of a master craftsman.

Equally notable is that this splendid soldier, on October 31, 1953, enrolled Father Kapaun in the Jesuit Seminary Association and had the following certificate sent to the priest's parents:

"This is to certify that Perpetual Membership in the JESUIT SEMINARY ASSOCIATION of the Chicago Province of the Society of Jesus has been granted Father Emil J. Kapaun, who will share perpetually the spiritual benefits of the association."

The certificate and a letter of explanation from Father McBride, S. J., Director of the Association, gave a great deal of consolation to the bereaved parents.

When the Communists took Father from the prisoner hut to the so-called hospital, he had insisted upon taking along his oil stocks and stole. He thought he might have need of them. The oil stocks are cylindrical metal containers of the three holy oils, especially the oil for anointing the dying. The stole is a two or three inch wide strip of colored linen worn over the shoulders of the priest in administering the sacraments.

Captain Nardella and his companions had managed to hide the pyx, the small, gold-plated container for the Sacred hosts which Father had carried constantly on his person for several months before he was captured. But the Communists had discovered the pyx and taken it away.

Later, seeing the daughter of the Chinese camp commander playing with it, efforts were made to retrieve it.

When these efforts failed, a solemn protest was made and the Chinese finally promised that the pyx would be returned at the proper time. Just before the last prisoners left the camp, the pyx was handed over.

Nardella, Dowd, O'Connor and McCool brought it with them into Freedom Village. Within a half hour after their arrival, they went to confession, assisted at Mass and received Holy Communion from this very pyx.

Carried through proper channels, the pyx finally reached Francis Cardinal Spellman, Military Ordinary, spiritual leader for Catholics in the United States Armed Services.

Another relic of the martyr priest was a little prayer-book used in the prison camp for the Stations of the Cross. Captain O'Connor pointed out the prayer for the Fifth Station, which tells how Simon of Cyrene helped Jesus carry His cross. It reads:

"Lord, make me worthy to carry the cross of truth with Thee and to walk in the ways of truth with Thee to death."

"That fits Father Kapaun," O'Connor declared.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

MILITARY AWARDS

All this praise from his fellow prisoners was recognized officially by a grateful government.

On September 2, 1950, Chaplain Kapaun was awarded the Bronze Star Medal, and on August 18, 1951, the Distinguished Service Cross. Both awards were for extraordinary heroism in action in Korea.

At 9 o'clock on October 18, 1952, the Most Reverend Mark K. Carroll, Bishop of the Diocese of Wichita, Kansas, offered Mass in the boyhood church of Father Kapaun at Pilsen. The large church of St. John was filled to capacity. Two army chaplains from Fort Riley, Kansas, assisted. The parents of the hero-priest insisted that the citations be given to Bishop Carroll. "The Bishop should have them," they said, "we gave our son to the diocese."

Immediately after the Mass, Lt. Col. George F. Schwartz, of Salina, Kansas, in the name of the United States Government, presented the two medals to Bishop Carroll, and read the following citations for bravery:

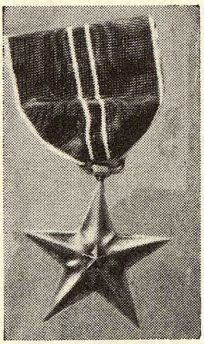
HEADQUARTERS 1ST CAVALRY DIVISION
2 September 1950

"AWARD OF THE BRONZE STAR MEDAL — By direction of the President, under the provisions of Executive Order 9419, and pursuant to the authority contained in AR 600-45, the Bronze Star Medal with 'V' device for heroic achievement in connection with military operations against an enemy of the United States is awarded the following named officer:



Lieut. Col. Schwartz of Salina, presenting the awards to Bishop Carroll. Seated with His Excellency are Mr. and Mrs. Kapaun. Standing are Chaplain James Colgan and Chaplain Paul Roache, of the Herington Air Base.

"CHAPLAIN (CAPTAIN) EMIL J. KAPAUN 0558217, Chaplain Corps, United States Army, a member of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division, displayed heroism in action against the enemy near Kumchon, Korea, on 2 August 1950. Chaplain Kapaun received information that there was a wounded man in an exposed position on the left flank of the first battalion who could not be removed as



Bronze Star

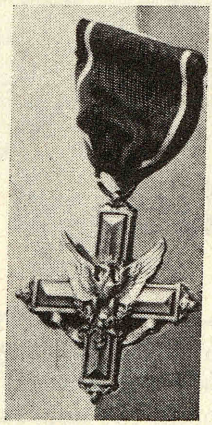
there were no litter bearers available. Chaplain Kapaun, together with another officer, immediately proceeded to the front lines where he contacted the Battalion Commander in order to obtain the approximate location of the wounded man. With total disregard for personal safety, Chaplain Kapaun and his companion went after the wounded man. The entire route to the wounded soldier was under intense enemy machinegun and small arms fire. However, Chaplain Kapaun successfully evacuated the soldier, thereby saving his life. This heroic action on the part of Chaplain Kapaun reflects great credit upon himself and the military service.

BY COMMAND OF MAJOR GENERAL GAY.

HEADQUARTERS
EIGHTH UNITED STATES ARMY, KOREA
18 August 1951

"Distinguished-Service Cross—Awards . . . I

"I. AWARD OF THE DISTINGUISHED-SERVICE CROSS—By direction of the President, under the provisions of the Act of Congress, approved 9 July 1918, and pursuant to authority contained in AR 600-45, the Distinguished-Service Cross for extraordinary heroism in



Distinguished Service Cross

action is awarded in the name of the Commander-in-Chief, Far East, to the following named officer:

"Chaplain (Captain) Emil J. Kapaun, 0558217, United States Army. Chaplain KAPAUN, while a member of Headquarters Company, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division, distinguished himself by extraordinary heroism in the vicinity of Unsan, Korea, on 1 and 2 November 1950.

On the afternoon of 1 November, and continuing through the following 36 hours, the regiment was subjected to a relentless, fanatical attack by hostile troops attempting to break through the perimeter defense. In the early morning hours, the enemy succeeded in breaking through the defense, and hand-to-hand combat ensued in the immediate vicinity of the command post where the aid station had been set up. Chaplain KAPAUN, with complete disregard for his personal safety, calmly moved among the wounded men, giving them medical aid and easing their fears. His courageous manner inspired all those present and many men who might otherwise have fled in panic were encouraged by his presence and remained to fight the enemy. As the battle progressed, the number of wounded increased greatly and it became apparent that many of the men would be unable to escape the enemy encirclement. Finally, at dusk on 2 November, the remaining able-bodied men were ordered to attempt to break through the surrounding enemy. At this time, although fully aware of the great danger, Chaplain KAPAUN voluntarily remained behind and when last seen was administering medical treatment and rendering religious rites wherever needed. The extraordinary heroism displayed by Chaplain KAPAUN in this action reflects great credit on himself and is in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service. Entered the federal service from Kansas."

By COMMAND OF GENERAL VAN FLEET

Bishop Carroll then delivered the sermon, which is given here as it expressed so aptly and touchingly the sentiments of all who revered Father Kapaun:

"We assemble this morning in St. John's Church, Pilsen, to receive from the United States Government and the distinguished representatives of the Armed Forces, two

citations and medals recognizing the unusual heroism of Chaplain Emil Kapaun in the present Korean conflict. It is with a heavy heart and a troubled soul that I accept these deserved honors from the President of the United States. To be sure, we would rather have Chaplain Emil Kapaun in our midst to receive in person these magnificent testimonials from a grateful Government. We know that these awards are for Father Kapaun, not for us, though we are indirectly honored ourselves. It is therefore an unforgettable privilege for me, in behalf of Father Kapaun's beloved parents, to accept these significant awards.

"As you all know, Father Kapaun disappeared on the Korean War Front on November 2, 1950. No word has reached us about his safety except that we know that he was captured alive by the Chinese Communists. Almost worse than certain death is the unspeakable sorrow and the ever-lengthening anxiety and worry of his beloved parents. Such waiting, such sorrowing is untouchable—for no human ministration can assuage that sorrow; no mere words, however elegant, can comfort; no rewards, even those as noble and precious as received this morning, can compensate parents even for the temporary loss of their son.

"We, dear people, are the beneficiaries of the heroism of our fighting men on the battle front. We salute today, reverently, all who have made the supreme sacrifice, for they have died as Bancroft, the Historian, reminds us, 'to set deep the pillars in the structures of our national life'. We salute, likewise, those devoted soldiers of Christ, our Chaplains, who likewise have laid down their lives because of devotion to duty and because of their solemn dedication to the principles of truth, justice and peace.

"Our own tears and prayers have enobled, these past two years, the awards given to Father Kapaun today.

These testimonials of a grateful government and the military are, as we know, a petty recompense for human life, still they are the only eminent recognition that can be given by the President of the United States. I am sure that these glorious honors will comfort and console, in some small measure, the devoted parents of our missing Chaplain.

"It is futile to attempt the eulogy of a young priest who dies at the hands of the enemy or who disappears on a battle front. I shall not attempt such an encomium—the eloquent facts are more than sufficient to tell the challenging story, the selfless motives, the radiant glory of Father Kapaun's meritorious service. How can I describe his heroic actions which were responsible for his capture? Father Kapaun was a simple, humble priest and had the spirit of his Divine Master. Our dear Lord came into the world to seek out the lost sheep of His Father's flock. Father Kapaun entered the Army of the United States, not once, but twice, as a Chaplain with a precisely parallel intention. Christ's mission was completed in His death at the hands of His enemies on Calvary. Father Kapaun disappeared in Korea under the fierce fire of the enemy. He stayed with his men when he could have escaped, but he loved his men—the sheep of his flock—and no sermon he ever preached could tell more effectively his appreciation of his office as a priest.

"Father Kapaun disappeared doing God's work. We know that in prison when deprived by Communistic hatred of his priestly duties, he knelt with his men to say the rosary. His agile mind, his generous heart were one with Christ, his entire saintly personality thoroughly dedicated to the things of God. It is hard to eulogize someone whose spontaneous heroism is the perfect tribute to himself, to his priesthood, and to the use he made of it. So also, it is hard to reconcile the disappearance of Father Kapaun

who was so pleasing to God, so inspiring to his men, and so universally beloved by both the clergy and the laity.

"It is easy to understand the grief of his parents and of the good people of Pilsen who loved and admired their own native son. For almost two years we have been sorrowing and waiting for news of his whereabouts. At the same time, our sorrow has given way to prayerful reflection, our grief has been assuaged by the pride in the graphic story of Father Kapaun's devotion to duty. What confidence we have, even though Father Kapaun be dead, in the assurance of his eternal salvation. What sacred joy do we have in the knowledge that his brief priesthood was far from being in vain—rather was so perfectly fulfilled.

"These are thoughts filled with unction to console Mr. and Mrs. Kapaun who have been so conspicuous in their love for the Catholic priesthood, who themselves have constituted a truly Christian family. They graciously and generously gave their son to the service of God, and to me it is a great consolation to realize that Father Kapaun disappeared on the Korean War Front at almost the very age which ended the glorious career of Jesus Christ, the eternal Priest.

"Many of our Clergy labor for decades of years. We try to do our best in daily duty; we try to be good men, faithful and blameless, yet when the years have passed, we are quite certain that we have been mediocre in our lasting achievements. Father Kapaun is ordained, he labors only ten years, then suddenly, in glorious identity with Christ, offers his life for his men. Strangely enough, people term such a sacrifice a tragedy. In purely mundane terms, perhaps it seems so, but viewed by eternal standards, his lot is enviable. Time is in God's hands — His service is ours. Chaplain Emil Kapaun was the subject of God's special love. He went forth a young priest — happy,

zealous, with a young priest's hunger for souls — and at the height of all this, he disappears, perhaps to suffer, to die. What Christian soul will not bless the good God for the grace of his obedience even unto death?

"Finally, let me share with you, dear people, and especially with Emil's beloved parents, a heart warming tribute to him from a soldier. This eulogy, given gladly by one of the boys who loved him, is the highest praise we can offer Emil Kapaun on this day when the United States Military confers upon him these honors in absentia."

(Bishop Carroll then read the letter from Private Ernest Ritter, to be found in full elsewhere. This was the first letter received with the heartening news that Father Kapaun was captured alive.)

"Father Emil, I, your Bishop, salute you on this day when your devotion to duty is so rightfully recognized. Wherever you are, you have our love and prayers and we thank you for your majestic example and your unswerving allegiance to the ideals of your priesthood. Wherever you are, whether dead or alive, we know that you are in God's arms. If you are dead, your priestly soul is already in heaven, for you were an angel among men. If you are still alive, and we hope you are—for that has been our prayer during these several years—we know that you are safe, because you have the rosary of our Lady in your hands.

"Worthy Army Officers, I thank you for your presence here today acting in the dual capacity as representative of the Military Authorities and the Federal Government. Yours is a sad mission, but the honors you have conferred on Chaplain Kapaun, are hallowed by your own personal tribute to the valor of one of your comrades. The Honors of today shall be lovingly cherished and guarded by the Diocese of Wichita. The memory of Father Kapaun shall be kept green in our garden of remembrance. Together

we will pray for him—for the cause of peace—begging God's benediction upon our fallen and missing soldiery. May their rewards find fulfillment in Christ's Sermon on the Mount, 'Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God'. Amen."

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

MEMORIAL MASS

Since the day of his capture in November of 1950, the only official report of Father Kapaun was "missing in action". Hope that he was alive and that he would be among the exchanged prisoners flickered feebly until June of 1953 when his name failed to appear on the lists of those who returned from prison camps. On July 12, 1953, the Kapauns received the following letter from the War Department:

"Dear Mr. Kapaun:

"I am writing you concerning your son, Chaplain (Capt.) Emil J. Kapaun, who was reported missing in action in Korea on 2 November 1950.

"Information has been received from several of the men recently repatriated following imprisonment in North Korea that Chaplain Kapaun died on 5 May, 1951, at Pyoktong, North Korea, while in the hands of the opposing forces. The cause of his death was not definitely known.

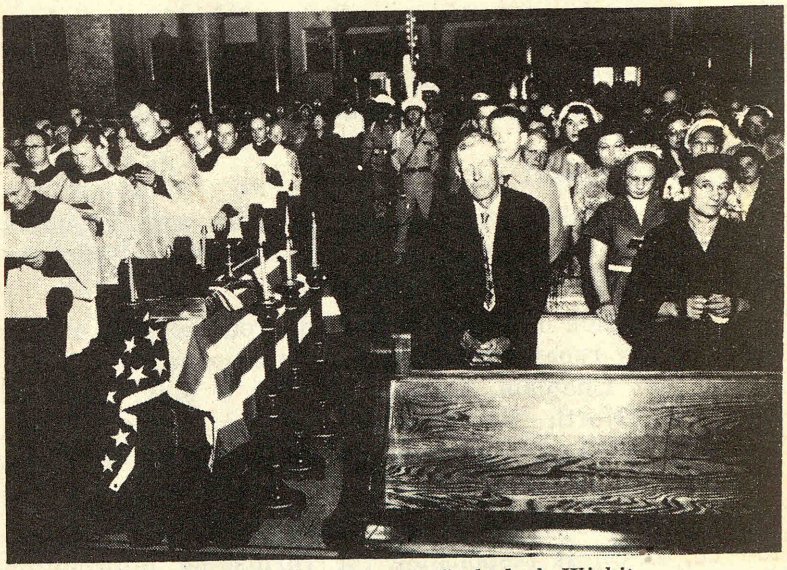
"The offices of the Quartermaster General, Washington 25, D. C., is responsible for furnishing information on recovery, identification and disposition of the remains of the dead. It is customary for that office to communicate promptly with the next of kin upon receipt of definite information for the overseas command.

"I sincerely regret that this message must carry so much sorrow into your home and I hope that in time you may find sustaining comfort in knowing that he served

his country honorably. My deepest sympathy is extended to you in your bereavement.

Sincerely yours,
Wm. E. Bergin
Major General, U. S. A.
The Adjutant General of the Army"

The grief-stricken parents forwarded the letter to Bishop Carroll, who immediately announced special services for the first gold-star priest of the diocese of Wichita. On July 29, 1953, His Excellency celebrated



Memorial Mass, St. Mary Cathedral, Wichita.
Dad and Mother in the right foreground.

Solemn Pontifical Requiem Mass in the Cathedral of St. Mary, Wichita, Kansas. More than 100 priests were present, together with a large number of Sisters and lay people, and a big delegation from Pilsen. Among them were Mr. and Mrs. Kapaun and their son, Eugene, with his wife.

A four-man color guard from the Wichita Air Base stood at attention in front of the catafalque. A choir of 12 priests sang the Mass. The Bishop gave the absolution over the flag-draped catafalque, which was surmounted by symbols of the priesthood—the chalice, stole and missal. He then delivered a sermon on the priesthood and lauded Father Kapaun as a worthy representative of that exalted office.

On this occasion Bishop Carroll's sermon was in part as follows:

"It was some ten days ago that we were all shocked and saddened by the tragic news that Father Emil J. Kapaun was officially declared dead by the War Department of the United States. This young priest, as we remember, was captured by the Communists on November 2, 1950, and has been listed as missing in action since that time. We had hoped against hope that Father Kapaun would be among the returning prisoners of war, but apparently his work was done and his brief heroic life as a priest and a soldier came to a dramatic end in a hospital somewhere in North Korea.

"Father Kapaun was, as we all well know, a good and holy priest—an apostle of love and the faithful captain of souls. He possessed a very attractive personality, a man apparently always in good humor, with a winning smile and a word of encouragement and kindness for everyone he met. He was ideally equipped to be a parish priest and was universally admired and loved by those he had served here in the Diocese of Wichita. Father Kapaun was not only an apostle of peace and love, but he was the valiant soldier who guarded the flock of Christ committed to his care, and he stood stalwart, always, for those divine truths to which his vocation was dedicated.

"After the infamous attack on Pearl Harbor, Father Kapaun generously volunteered his services to the Army.

As a Chaplain, he was held in high esteem by his fellow officers and the men he served, and because of his excellent record, was promoted to a Captaincy. Some few years ago, Father Kapaun, after having been returned to civilian life, volunteered again because he stated men in the Army needed a Chaplain even more than the folks at home need a parish priest. . . .

"Once a year, on Memorial Day, grateful Americans bless and pray for the souls of our military departed, but since Pearl Harbor every day in the calendar has become a Memorial Day as hourly our casualties increase. A soldier deserves our esteem and our prayers because when he joins the armed forces he has the virtual intention of making the supreme sacrifice, and surely Our Lord had the fallen soldier in mind when He said, 'Greater love than this no man hath, than that a man lay down his life for his friends'. . . .

"An Army and a Navy are essential to the defense of our Country, and God has blessed these United States of America down through the years because when freedom is challenged there have responded the finest men in all the world — our American youth. The great Cardinal Mercier, beloved hero of the First World War, in a famous letter states specifically that every soldier who dies for truth and freedom and peace is a martyr in God's eyes.

" 'If I am asked what I think of the eternal salvation of a brave man who has consciously given his life in defence of his country's honour, and in vindication of violated justice, I shall not hesitate to reply that without any doubt whatever Christ crowns his military valour; and that death, accepted in this Christian spirit, assures the safety of that man's soul. "Greater love than this no man hath," said our Saviour, "than that a man lay down his life for his friends." And the soldier who dies to save his brothers and to defend the hearths and altars

of his country, reaches this highest of all degrees of charity. He may not have made a close analysis of the value of his sacrifice; but must we suppose that God requires of the plain soldier, in the excitement of battle, the methodical precision of the moralist or the theologian? Can we who revere his heroism doubt that his God welcomes him with love?'

"This morning, in the Cathedral of St. Mary in Wichita, the Clergy, Religious and the family of Father Kapaun gather before the Altar of the divine Soldier, Jesus Christ. Here on the cross we see Him who died for the sins of the world and for peace among men. When we look at the Altar of God, we never see the Apostle of peace or the risen victorious Christ—always we behold Christ the Soldier dying for humanity. And so the cross is the blessed symbol of Him Who gave His life for the temporal and eternal well-being of all men. . . .

"There are many consolations for the members of Father Kapaun's family, particularly for his broken-hearted father and mother. His death, of course, is a great loss to the diocese and to the Army, but I would hesitate to tell what his loss means to his beloved parents. Their greatest consolation is that Father Kapaun met his death in acts of heroic duty — which were recognized and praised by his fellow soldiers. As a prisoner, his name and deeds were held in benediction — and no soldier among the more than three millions in the Armed Forces of the United States has received such beautiful eulogies as our own Father Kapaun.

"Today then, we honor Father Kapaun by offering for him, the Holy Mass which is the everlasting memorial and the continuation of the supreme sacrifice made by Christ on Calvary. Every day in our Catholic Church is 'Memorial Day' because in every Mass the priest is bidden to keep a sacred tryst with the faithful departed. 'Remember

also, O Lord, Thy servants and handmaids who are gone before us with the sign of faith and rest in the sleep of peace.' There is an association close and beautiful of the death of a soldier and the death of Christ. In fact, everyone who gives his life for his country finds the sanction and reward of his own death in the sacrifice and death of Christ on the Cross.

"In the name of the priests of the Diocese of Wichita who admired Father Kapaun for the fine man he was, I offer to his family this very sincere expression of heartfelt sympathy with the assurance that we, his brother priests, will deem it a glorious privilege to remember him prayerfully — constantly inspired in our own lives by his prodigious love for God and man.

"May Jesus Christ, the Apostle of Peace, the divine Soldier, welcome home one who has fallen, one who has given his life for his country — one whose name will be held in veneration as a great American for decades to come, and may He grant him eternal rest, eternal love and peace everlasting. Amen."

After the Cathedral services, a luncheon was served to the Bishop, clergy and members of the Kapaun family in the Catholic cafeteria. Major George Hickey, Catholic chaplain at the Wichita Air Base, pinned a Gold Star medal on Mrs. Kapaun. He also presented the parents a fourth decoration given by the Defense Department for Father Kapaun, the medal for service in Korea.

(Note—Although the telegram from the War Department gave May 6 as the date of Father Kapaun's death, his fellow prisoners are quite certain that the date was May 23. The prisoners kept an accurate calendar of the passing days. Father Kapaun was removed to the hospital on May 21. An American officer—one of the very few who came back alive—returned from the hospital two days later, stating that the Chaplain had died that morning.)

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

UNIVERSAL ACCLAIM

All the praise of Father Kapaun was simply and succinctly stated by his Bishop who constantly and faithfully corresponded with his Chaplain. The Bishop called upon the clergy and the laity to pray for his safe return, and he, as his spiritual Father, felt deeply his tragic death.

Said Bishop Carroll: "In a concert of voices—Protestant, Jewish, Catholic—the fellow soldiers of Father Kapaun declared that their Chaplain 'spoke, acted and died like Christ'. This is the supreme, and ultimate eulogy which beggars any further tribute."

THE CATHOLIC CHAPLAINS' MEMORIAL CHAPEL

This Chapel, erected under the supervision of the St. Columban Fathers and paid for by the contributions of American Soldiers, was dedicated on November 4, 1953 in Seoul, Korea, by the local Bishop, The Most Rev. Paul M. Rho. The Chapel honors the five American priests who made the supreme sacrifice in the Korean Theatre of war. There were many distinguished guests at the dedication including President Syngman Rhee, Ambassador Ellis Briggs and General Maxwell D. Taylor. In the vestibule of the church is a beautiful marble plaque with this legend:

DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY
OF
Father Herman D. Felhoelter
Father Francis X. Coppens
Father Leo P. Craig
Father Emil J. Kapaun
Father Lawrence F. Brunnert
And to all who gave their lives
in the cause of justice, freedom
and peace in Korea.

At the dedication ceremony Chaplain (Captain) Francis C. Biel paid solemn tribute to each brave priest in an eloquent sermon. Of Father Kapaun, he said, in part—

"While with the 8th Cavalry Regiment of the 1st Cavalry Division, he was awarded the Bronze Star for his heroism in action against the enemy near Kumchon, Korea. Father Kapaun was taken prisoner on 2 November, 1950, when 'although fully aware of the great danger, he voluntarily remained behind and when last seen was administering medical treatment and rendering religious rites wherever he found need. Father Kapaun died May 23, 1951, while in the hands of the enemy, after his heroic services for the prisoners of war had become legendary. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross posthumously."

FOUR CHAPLAINS AWARD

This award was granted posthumously to Chaplain Kapaun on February 12, 1954, in a ceremony conducted on the site of the Four Chaplains' Memorial in Falls Church, Virginia. On behalf of Father Kapaun's parents, the award was received by Lt. Ray Dowe of Washington, D. C., fellow prisoner of the Chaplain. It was Lt. Dowe who thrilled all Americans by his magnificent tribute to his beloved comrade in the Saturday Evening Post of

January 16, 1954, as related to Harold H. Martin.

The Four Chaplains' Award is named in honor of the four brave men—two Ministers, a Rabbi and a Priest—who voluntarily gave up their life belts and died in the sinking of the U. S. Troopship "Dorchester" in 1943. The award is presented annually to the Chaplain who best exemplifies "the spirit of the United States Armed Forces in serving God and their fellowmen."

B'NAI BRITH CITATION

"Dear Mrs. Kapaun:

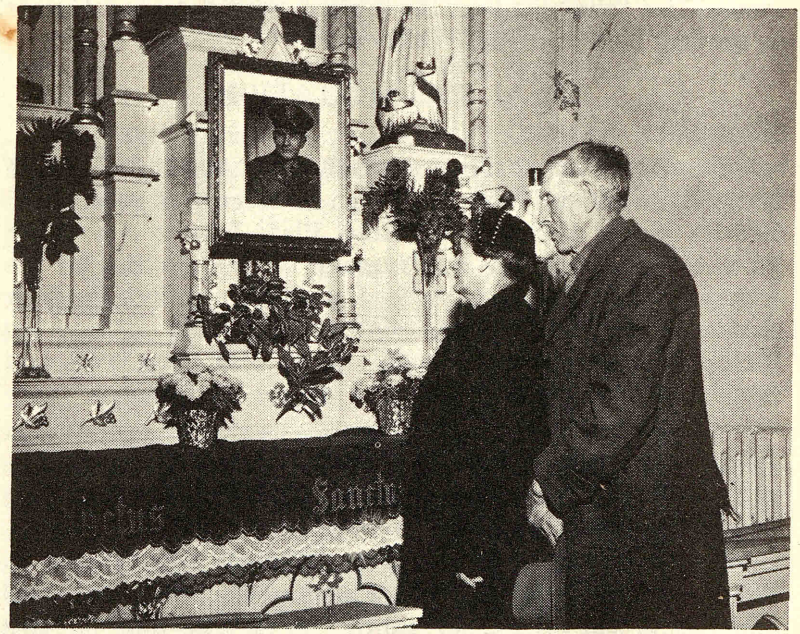
"On Saturday, February sixth, the Alexander Goode Lodge of the B'nai Brith, a Jewish Fraternal Organization, held its annual dinner at the Hotel Plaza here in New York on a date close to the anniversary of the sinking of the American transport, U. S. S. Dorchester in which four chaplains — Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish — gave up their life belts to service men and so also their lives and sank with the ship beneath the Arctic waves.

"Each year for the past four years this Jewish organization has sought to single out military chaplains who by their lives have exemplified the spirit of the original four who went down with the Dorchester. Should it be any cause for wonder that this group should have chosen as the outstanding Army Chaplain of the year, your own good and heroic son — Father Emil? It is true that he died nearly three years ago in North Korea, a martyr and shining example of the American priesthood, but since his death was officially ascertained only this year, the award was given to him at this time.

"Father Emil was the subject of a great eulogy at The Four Chaplains Award Dinner and Bishop Griffiths received, in my name, the enclosed check in the amount of $500.00 which is a testimonial of the Jewish Wool and Worsted Industry in New York to the sacrificial service

rendered to Americans of every religious persuasion by your son.

"I pray Almighty God to console you for the loss of this wonderful, priestly son whom you gave to the Church and to America, that the spiritual and moral values for



Mother and Dad before a picture of their heroic son at the side altar of their parish church. (Courtesy Topeka Capital)

which he lived and for which he died may remain always an integral part of our great American heritage.

"With every good wish and blessing, I am

Sincerely yours,

F. Cardinal Spellman
Military Vicar"

Military Ordinariate
February 11, 1954

SEMINARIANS TAKE FATHER KAPAUN AS MODEL

On February 26, 1954, the students of St. John's Seminary of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, Camarillo, California, sent a letter to Mr. and Mrs. Kapaun:

"The Spiritual Bouquet which we at St. John's Seminary send to you is for your wonderful son, Father Emil. Father Emil means a great deal to all of us as men, but more as future priests. He served Christ to the end of his life, just as Christ did for everyone. Your son will live in the minds of all of us who heard the story of his sacrifices for God and for God's loved ones."

SEMINARY BURSE

A peculiarly fitting tribute is being sponsored by the Knights of Columbus of the Wichita Diocese in what has been called the Chaplain Emil Kapaun Seminary Burse. The goal set was $15,000.00 but indications are that it will easily pass that mark. The interest from this fund will help to educate a replacement for Father Kapaun in the Wichita Diocese.

KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS COUNCIL

The following letter to Bishop Carroll was written December 9, 1953:

"We Catholic men in a section of Los Angeles called Westchester have formed a new council of the Knights of Columbus. We have decided to call it the Father Emil J. Kapaun Council, after the heroic priest who died doing his duties for God and man in Korea, helping the suffering and dying in a POW Red camp.

"We are very pleased and proud to be able to use this name and my only hope is that this council lives up to all that his glorious career symbolizes."

A MINISTER OFFERS PRAISE

The heroic Chaplain's faithfulness to friends and the

affection this aroused in their hearts stands out in every sentence of a letter of sympathy written to the priest's parents on September 14, 1953, by a Protestant Chaplain, the Rev. Arthur E. Mills, who rated as his best friends among the "sky pilots" Chaplain Kapaun and Chaplain Donald Carter. He writes in part:

"When I was alerted to accompany a unit to Korea, I asked to be assigned to the 8th Cavalry, so I could be with the two of them.

"Father was with me constantly until the last of July, 1950. He had gone to another battalion to visit the men, and when he heard that I had been seriously wounded he walked several miles to give any assistance he could render.

"I've never known a braver man, a more devoted Christian leader, a more sympathetic listener or a better friend. . . . I've prayed that he would be spared, but God rewarded him in a greater way. . . . Thank you for giving us your son. . . . He is a hero, a Saint if anyone ever was."

MEMORIAL LIBRARY

Father Kapaun's Alma Mater, Conception Seminary, at Conception, Missouri, is constructing a new library, which will be dedicated to its illustrious alumnus.

MOVIE SUGGESTED

The impact of Father Kapaun's unselfish service was seen in the response to a request by Dale Francis in his Column "Looking and Listening" in Our Sunday Visitor. This Columnist has been conducting, for years, an intelligent and effective crusade for better movies. Dale Francis recommended to his readers a filming of the life of Father Kapaun. In response to the article in his column, on this subject, he received some forty thousand signatures approving such a movie.

MEMORIAL PLAQUE AND FUND

December 8, 1953

"Dear Bishop Carroll:

"As secretary-treasurer of the 'Father Kapaun Prisoner of War Memorial Fund', I purposely delayed in communicating with you until the promises we made in captivity materialized in freedom. Those promises were: To erect a small memorial to Father Kapaun perpetuating the memory of this outstanding individual, both as a chaplain and as a man among men. This memorial is to be placed in the parish of his nativity and youth. The second promised was to donate a purse to charity in the fulfillment of our long cherished dream.

"Since my release from the Communist Forces in Korea on September 6, 1953, here is the progress achieved. The arrangements for the construction of the memorial have been made. The Most Reverend James McNulty of Paterson, New Jersey, and Monsignor Carlo Cianci of the St. Michael's parish, Paterson, New Jersey, are actively interested in completing the memorial. On an inclosure to this letter, a sketch of the memorial is set out in rough detail.

"From all over America, England and Puerto Rico and the Philippines contributions have been pouring in for the fund so that now my records reflect that there is more than four-fold the amount Father Kapaun had pledged to donate to charity. The citizens of Paterson, New Jersey, contributed over $1,100.00. This money will be given to Your Excellency to be used for any charity you deem necessary.

"Plans for the presentation of the memorial will not be made without first seeking counsel from Your Excellency, since there may exist questions and problems which I have been unable to foresee. At present these problems can be overcome by correspondence, as I am

now in the process of reporting to my next assignment. Then final plans for the presentation of the memorial may be completed by more expeditious means. Looking forward to that day when our obscure dreams have become a reality.

Yours respectfully,
Ralph A. Nardella
Captain Infantry."

The ten man committee includes:

Capt. Ralpha Nardella
58 Ellison Street, Paterson, New Jersey
Capt. Clarence L. Anderson, M. C.
1553-F Pershing Drive, San Francisco, Calif.
Capt. Robert E. Burke
209 Olive Avenue, Moundsville, West Virginia
Capt. Sidney Esensten, M. C.
5412 Logan Avenue South, Minneapolis 9, Minn.
Mr. Frank Noel, c/o Associated Press
50 Rockefeller Plaza, New York 20, New York
Lt. Walter L. Mayo
81 Winsor Avenue, Watertown, Massachusetts
Capt. Wm. A. McClain
3314 Mohoning Avenue, Youngstown, Ohio
Major David F. MacGhee
3609 S. Church Circle, Tampa, Florida
Capt. Joseph L. O'Connor
443 B. Craig Drive, Columbus, Georgia
W. O. Felix J. McCool
129 Carr Drive, Glendale, California

The volume and variety of letters from those who knew Father Kapaun personally, and from those who knew him merely by reading accounts in magazines and newspapers, are simply astounding. Space will permit giving only a few of these tributes.

An Episcopalian clergyman, the Rev. Mr. Stanley J.

Davis, the only British chaplain to be taken prisoner in Korea, testifies:

"Father Kapaun's name has become a legend among the POWs who knew him, and the memory of this heroic and gracious priest whose ministrations surmounted denominational barriers will long be revered by Catholics and Protestants alike."

TRIBUTE FROM HELEN STEWART OF SEPULVEDA, CALIFORNIA

One of the more beautiful tributes to Father Kapaun was a magnificent hand painted scroll sent to Bishop Carroll by Helen Stewart. This woman, after reading the account of Father Kapaun in the Saturday Evening Post, sent to Bishop Carroll a handsome crayon sketch of the Chaplain and an exquisite poem in blank verse which she entitled, "Being Dead, he yet Speaketh". Space does not permit the entire tribute, but these few thoughts show the elegance of her verse:

Being dead, this hero-chaplain has spoken
To my wakened heart as I sit and meditate
Upon his ordeal across the sea. As with a pen
Of gold, it has winged its spirit-way to me!
Could it be that I who've sat at home in ease
Surrounded by all comfort—heard the best of
Sermons too—no! I've never known what
Sacrifice, or, suffering is, until, this Saintly,
Soldier brushed aside all shame and shown me
By his fortitude, upon the bloody battlefield,
And in that filthy prison-camp, the beauty of
The Lamb of God!
Oh God! to think that I could ever murmur
More upon this earth, when he unwavering,
Walked in mud and mire, in snow and sleet
Holding to his breast the dying, as Father,

As Shepherd, 'til the very last. He's earned his Heavenly rest! Being dead, he yet speaketh.

TRIBUTE FROM MAJOR GERALD FINK, U. S. M. C.

May 4, 1954

"Dear Father Tonne:

"I do not desire any credit for my work. Could I have done the crucifix in precious metals it would not the less take away from the memory of Christ or lend more to the memory of Father Kapaun, 'a man the world should know about.'

"I am extremely humble in the face of Father Kapaun's memory and the life that he led. Here was a man given to live, as 'God intended men to live'. His self sacrifice, his love of his fellowmen, and even his love of his enemy marked him more saint than man. I did not know him as well as others, yet to have lived under his influence is like having bathed in the light of graciousness. As a priest of the Catholic Church, he gave to all what I am sure your Holy Father in Rome has come to expect of all his field representatives (that is to put it in my own phraseology).

"With the trials and tribulations that beset our men in the hands of the Reds, with the unending onslaughts they made to shake our faith in God, with the cruelty which only man can show to man, with the hunger, the pestilence, with the deprivation all were subjected to, with the dejection, and the complete destitution we were faced with—with all these things that added to the crucible of fire that all men's souls were tested in—Father Kapaun withstood them, and showed the way and the light of the Lord. I cannot add more to his story other than to say I bear him love for showing us how a man must face his adversities.

"Captain Ralph Nardella is the man who deserves the plaudits more than anyone else for the good work that

was done. Captain Ralph was a leader both spiritually and morally in the coils of captivity. He followed the leadership of Father Kapaun, and did for his fellowmen that which they could not do for themselves. He was selflessly devoted to his duty as an American and as a Catholic.

"I am singularly in debt to the memory of Father Kapaun and to the leadership of Captain Ralph Nardella for enabling me in a very small way to help my fellowmen.

"I am not a Catholic and yet because of the greatness of Father Kapaun and his Church I honor him and it in daily prayer. I have enrolled Father Kapaun's name in a perpetual membership of the Society of Jesus. I attended in my undergraduate days the University of Loyola. Not knowing the protocol between his status and that of the Jesuits I felt nevertheless I could do no less for his memory with a group of educators and priests whom I consider very highly. I wish the folder sent to me by the Jesuit Seminary Association to be forwarded to Father Kapaun's parents. I feel that in this way I can honor them also, for as the tree grows so grows the branch, and may his memory do honor to very wonderful parents."

PATERSON, NEW JERSEY

"A rude cross carved by Major Gerald Fink of Chicago and used by Captain Ralph A. Nardella for religious services when both men were in a Korean Prison camp was blessed yesterday in an impressive ceremony at St. Michael's Catholic Church at the 10:00 o'clock Mass celebrated by the Most Rev. James A. McNulty, Bishop of Paterson.

"Now mounted in a handsome bronze tablet, the cross is a memorial to the heroic Catholic Chaplain, the Rev. Emil J. Kapaun of Pilsen, Kansas. In a grim prison camp,

Father Kapaun won the respect of Captain Nardella and his other fellow prisoners by his utter disregard of his own safety and comfort, and his sacrificial service in behalf of all the prisoners — Protestant, Jewish or Catholic. Chaplain Kapaun died in a prison hospital May 23rd, 1951, at the age of 35.

"The crucifix and the bronze plaque will be displayed in St. Michael's Church this week and then sent to Pilsen where it will remain permanently in St. John's Church."
(Morning Call, Paterson, New Jersey
May 10, 1954)

WICHITA, KANSAS

In order to provide a living memorial for Chaplain Kapaun, Bishop Carroll announced that he would erect a new high school for boys which will bear the name "Chaplain Emil J. Kapaun Memorial High School." It is hoped that this school will be ready by September of 1955.

SACRED HEART COLLEGE—WICHITA

Since Father Kapaun was ordained in St. John's Chapel attached to Sacred Heart College, the Sisters of the Precious Blood have established a permanent memorial room where all his personal effects, library, military uniforms, vestments, religious articles will be displayed. Thousands of visitors have already viewed these precious relics of the Chaplain.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

COMING OF THE MAGI

"These soldiers have come to Pilsen from Korea—as the wise men of old came from the far east to Christ, their hearts full of grateful love and their hands full of gifts." In this arresting simile, Bishop Carroll struck the keynote of the unforgettable ceremonies which marked the bringing of the Memorial Crucifix, carved by fellow POWS, to the home parish of Father Kapaun.

The day, June 6, 1954, was truly a memorable occasion for the parents of the heroic priest, for his fellow prisoners, for the people of Pilsen, for the Bishop and the entire diocese. The day began with a memorial Mass in the spacious hall on the campus of Sacred Heart College, Wichita. The Mass offered by Bishop Carroll at 8:00 o'clock was appropriately held at Sacred Heart College because it marked the scene of Father Kapaun's ordination to the priesthood in 1940. About one thousand attended the service, and the sermon was given by the Bishop of Wichita.

The distinguished guests at the memorial rites were Col. Eugene Field, Commanding Officer of the First Cavalry Division, and Captains Ralph A. Nardella, James Curry and William McClain. These four soldiers represented the thousands of living and dead who fought in the heroic Division, the first to cross the 38th Parallel in Korea.

After the Mass, sponsored by the Knights of Columbus of Wichita, all went to Christ the King Parish Hall for a Communion breakfast. The Master of Ceremonies was

Colonel Louis Coira, Commanding Officer of the McConnell Air Force Base at Wichita. The first speaker was the Bishop, whose remarks were brief because he wanted to give ample time to the military. Col. Eugene Field, who was in charge of Father Kapaun's regiment and who was spared capture because he was wounded in battle and had been removed to a hospital, paid an eloquent tribute to his outstanding Chaplain. Col. Field stated that Father Kapaun had all the qualities that one might expect in a model soldier. He further stated that the outstanding characteristic of Father Kapaun was courage—"He was the personification of intestinal fortitude."

The feature speaker at the breakfast was, of course, Captain Ralph A. Nardella, who spoke eloquently and feelingly of Chaplain Kapaun and highlighted his address with many interesting incidents both humorous and serious. This devout soldier, who took over as fully as a layman could, the place of Father Kapaun, described with many touching examples, the inspiration that the priest gave both as a Chaplain and Prisoner to men of all faiths.

At the end of his address the Captain presented to Bishop Carroll, two significant treasures, a small missal which was used by Father Kapaun and the white cross from the helmet of the beloved priest. Finally he presented a check for $8,300.00 and told Bishop Carroll that the handsome gift could be used for any charitable purpose.

This munificent sum came from the Father Kapaun Memorial Fund launched in the prison camp and fulfilled after the passing of three years. The check represented contributions from the Military, from the many friends of Captain Nardella in and around Paterson, New Jersey, and from individuals of all religions and all walks of life.

From Wichita the ceremonies shifted to Pilsen, 72

miles northeast of Wichita—the end of the journey and the final resting place for the crucifix so painstakingly carved by Major Gerald Fink of the U. S. Marines. This crucifix, when first displayed at religious services in the prison camp, baffled the Communist guards. Captain Nardella stated that at first the Communists wanted to take it away—they talked about it constantly but never did anything about it.

The cross itself is twenty-six inches high, and the



Bishop Carroll studying the crucifix upon its arrival from Paterson, N. J. (Courtesy Advance Register)

figure of Christ, clad in a loin cloth, is tall and slender. There is exquisite detail and appeal in the carving.

The entire crucifix is mounted on a bronze plaque, 54 inches high and 34 inches wide, weighing 300 pounds. Inscribed in bronze, raised letters to the left are the words:

"IN MEMORY OF FATHER EMIL J. KAPAUN, WHO DIED IN A COMMUNIST PRISONER OF WAR CAMP, MAY 23, 1951."

To the right is this prayer, likewise in bronze: "LORD IT IS TRUE THY YOKE IS EASY, THY BURDEN LIGHT. I HAVE OFTEN EXPERIENCED THAT IT IS PLEASANT AND COMFORTING TO BEAR THE BURDEN OF DUTY. I WOULD RATHER DIE FOR THE TRUE VALUES OF LIFE THAN LIVE FOR THE FALSE."

The prayer is from the Fifth Station of the servicemen's Way of the Cross, which the men in the camp continued to say regularly and devoutly after Father's death. To his memory they always dedicated this Fifth Station, which tells how Simon of Cyrene helped Christ to carry His cross.

At 4 P. M. a procession formed at the Pilsen rectory. The processional cross, flanked by the American flag and religious banners took the lead, followed by the servers, the four trustees of the parish, visiting clergy, the four Army officers, and Bishop Carroll, who had as chaplains Father Charles Smith and Father Edward Pfirman.

The men in uniform had served and suffered with Father Kapaun. They knew him well. They loved him deeply. They came from distant points to prove their affection. Colonel Eugene Field, now stationed at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, was wounded before the attack that took most of his men. He commanded the regiment to

which Chaplain Kapaun was attached in Japan and later in Korea. Captain William A. McClain, stationed at Youngstown, Ohio, had served with the padre through to the last stand deep in North Korea, had been trapped and captured with him, had slept beside him in the same filthy hut. McClain declared that Father could have



Bishop Carroll points to the crucifix as a symbol of Chaplain Kapaun's life. (Courtesy Wichita Beacon)

escaped by leaving the wounded "but that was not his way." Captain James Curry, who spent months in prison camp with Father, is now stationed at Fort Sam Houston, San Antonio, Texas. He is a medical officer who was nursed back to health by the devoted chaplain. McClain and Curry are non-Catholics, but nobody can outdo them in singing the praises of the heroic padre. The fourth

officer was Captain Nardella. During the service all four of these splendid soldiers sat in the sanctuary, to the right of the plaque and crucifix which rested temporarily on a stout table to the Gospel side, near a large picture of Captain Kapaun in uniform.

The majestic and spacious church of St. John Nepomucene was packed with 750 people from far and wide, long before the procession entered to the dignified strains of ECCE SACERDOS MAGNUS (Behold the Great Priest).

After the Litany of the Sacred Heart, led by Father Patrick Hughes of Florence, Kansas, the pastor, Father Tonne, briefly welcomed all the guests and visitors, and then introduced what proved to be one of the most striking features of the day—the playing over a public address system of a recording of a sermon Father Kapaun made in Tokyo, Japan, April 22, 1950.

A trunk of the heroic chaplain's effects, lost for over two years, arrived at the parental home on Good Friday, April 16, 1954. One of its most precious treasures was an 18-inch recording. It was the last of five radio talks on the Eight Beatitudes which Father gave over the Far East Army Network. The talk was a simple and stirring homily on two of those Beatitudes: "Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God," and "Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

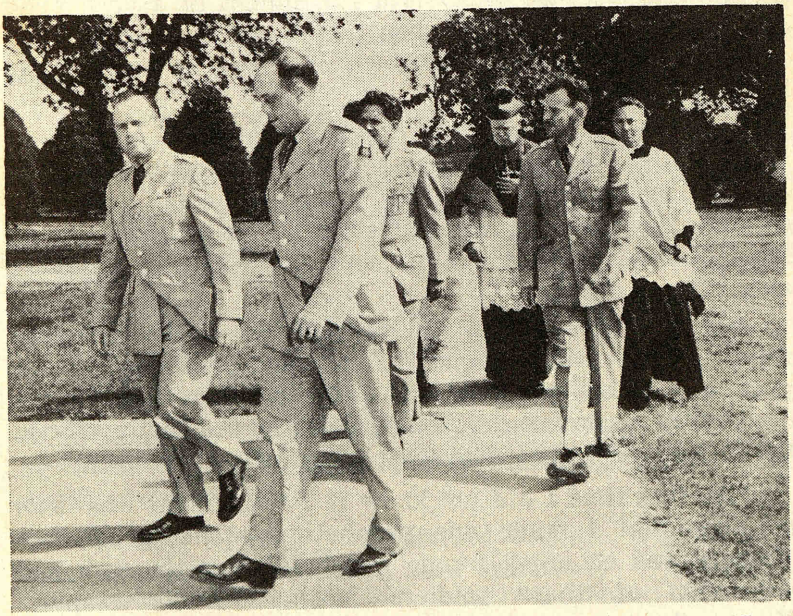
A hush of reverence and awe fell over the assemblage as the voice of their native son and former pastor came out of the loudspeaker, as if he were there in person talking to them. His concluding words were prophetic and came forth like a ringing challenge:

"In the early ages of the Church, the Christians were given their choice by the officials of the Roman Empire either of giving up their Christian faith, or of being put

to death. The martyrs would not give up their faith. Consequently they suffered death, even though they were innocent of any crime.

"In recent years the same thing has happened. Christian people who tried to practice their faith and remain true to it found themselves persecuted and ostracized by people opposed to the Christian faith. We can surely expect that in our own lives there will come a time when we must make a choice between being loyal to our faith or of giving allegiance to something else which is either opposed to or not in alliance with our faith.

"O God, we ask of Thee to give us the courage to be ever faithful to Thee. Blessed are they who suffer perse-



Left to right: Colonel Field, Capt. Nardella, Capt. McClain, Capt. Curry. Bishop Carroll is assisted by Father Edward Pfirman on his left, and Father Charles Smith (hidden). (Courtesy Wichita Beacon)

cution for justice sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

After this recording Bishop Carroll gave a stirring address, deepened by his paternal affection for Father Kapaun, and heightened by the solemnity of the occasion. Among other things he said:

"By the miracle of science we have just heard the voice of a great soldier of Christ, coming to us here on the rolling and productive plains of his home parish in Pilsen."

"I want to thank these four distinguished soldiers of the 1st Cavalry Division. . . . These men have had many important missions in their lives, but none so consecrated as this one, because today is a fulfillment of a vow made in the prison camp, that when they were free again, they would journey to this little town of Pilsen to honor their beloved Father Kapaun.

"As the Bishop of that wonderful priest, I gratefully welcome these soldiers of our country. Through the grace of God they have been spared. They have come here with dedicated devotion, sincere affection. This holy pilgrimage from Korea to Pilsen is without precedent in military annals."

His Excellency then enumerated the many precious relics the men had brought to Pilsen and concluded with a prophecy he had made a year and a half previous on the occasion of accepting the Bronze Star and the Distinguished Service Medal awarded to Chaplain Kapaun:

"At that time I did not know if Father Emil was dead or alive, but I made one prophetic statement: 'Father Kapaun was an angel among men.' That is the sum and substance of these soldiers' evaluation of Chaplain Kapaun."

After Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament and the

singing of Holy God, the parishioners and guests retired to the church hall for a bountiful supper and the opportunity to converse with the men who had survived the starvation and sufferings of a Communist prison camp — men who had felt the impact of Father Kapaun's Christ-like spirit — men who had sacrificed time and money and convenience to travel many miles in order to express their appreciation to and their admiration for the selfless padre from Pilsen.

Colonel Field, Captain McClain, and Captain Curry made brief but eloquent remarks. Curry, a medical officer whom Father Kapaun had nursed back to health from a siege of pneumonia, declared he has never been able to finish a talk about the heroic chaplain. He always chokes up. As his words trailed off in a hoarse whisper under the pressure of manly emotion, the crowd thundered its applause.

The special guest of honor, Captain Nardella, upon whose stalwart shoulders the mantle of the deceased priest had fallen, gave a brief talk and then answered questions for an hour. Many pointed and searching queries came from the surrounding tables and from the crowd standing six deep all around:

"What did you have to eat?"

"How did you know when Father died?"

"What was the hour plan for an average day?"

"Were any of your Chinese captors former Christians?"

"What 'brain-washing' or 'indoctrination' methods did the Communists use?"

Patiently, feelingly, the intrepid Captain, a giant of a man — physically, mentally and spiritually — answered every question, interspersing his explanations with humorous stories and with heart-rending details. Every word betrayed virile affection for the man of God who

helped to keep them alive, and who is now the inspiration of their lives.

According to previous arrangement, Captain Nardella remained overnight in the home of Father Kapaun's parents. For three hours Sunday evening he told intimate details of prison life to a family group — Mr. and Mrs. Enos Kapaun, their son Eugene and his wife, and the pastor. There are so many things a gold star Mother would like to know.

Monday morning, June 7, at a Memorial Mass for the

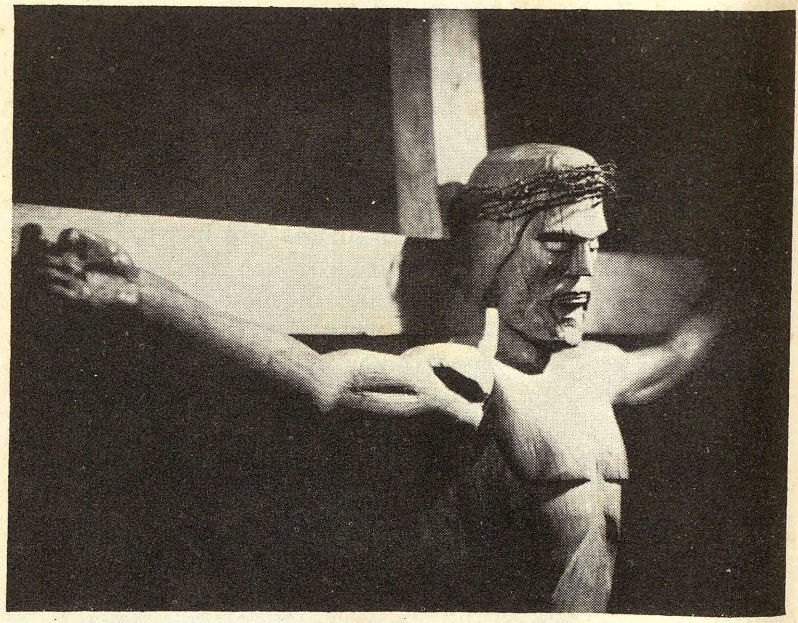


Mission Accomplished!

heroic chaplain in his home parish, Captain Nardella knelt beside the hero's Mother at the Communion rail. After breakfast in the rectory, it was time to part. Reverently and affectionately, as a son would his own

mother, Captain Nardella embraced Mrs. Kapaun, and shook with both hands the hand of Mr. Kapaun. All seemed to realize that it was the last living link between the parents and the soldier priest who had become to his fellow prisoners a symbol and personification of all that is worthwhile.

In a very definite sense, we are all beneficiaries from the life of Father Kapaun. He has left us a stirring example of devotion to duty. He has passed on to us a spirit of tolerance and understanding. He has given us a share in his dauntless bravery—of body and soul. He has transmitted to every one of us a new appreciation of America, and a keener, more realistic understanding of our country's greatest enemy—godlessness, now stalking the world in the form of Communism. He has bequeathed a picture of the Christ-like life. What Father Kapaun willed to us cannot be contained in memorials, however costly or beautiful. It is a treasure for the human soul—the spirit of one who loved and served God and man—even unto death.



Close-up of the Crucifix. (Courtesy of Capt. Nardella)

DATES AND EVENTS IN THE LIFE OF FATHER KAPAUN

"Being made perfect in a short space, he fulfilled a long time: for his soul pleased God." Book of Wisdom, 4:13.

April 20, 1916: Born at Pilsen, Kansas.

May 9, 1916: Baptized in St. John Nepomucene Church, Pilsen, Kansas.

Sept. 5, 1922: Entered first grade of District School taught by nuns.

May 18, 1928: Graduated from grade school.

April 11, 1929: Confirmed by Bishop Schwertner.

Sept. 1928 to May, 1930: Attended Pilsen High School, District 115, taught by nuns.

Sept. 1930 to June, 1932: Junior and Senior in Conception High School, Conception, Missouri.

Sept. 6, 1932: Conception College, classical course.

Sept. 1934 to June 1936: Philosophy course at Conception.

Sept. 11, 1936: Entered Kenrick Theological Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri.

June 5, 1937: Tonsure.

June 10, 1938: Minor Orders.

June 3, 1939: Ordained sub-deacon.

October 8, 1939: Ordained deacon.

June 9, 1940: Ordained priest by Bishop Winkelmann, Sacred Heart College Chapel, Wichita, Kansas.

June 20, 1940: First Mass, St. John Church, Pilsen.

June 30, 1940: Assistant in his home parish.

Jan. 5, 1943: Auxiliary Chaplain at Herington Air Base.

Sept. 16, 1943: Pastor of Pilsen, effective when Monsignor Sklenar resigns.

Nov. 2, 1943: Monsignor resigns.

June 15, 1944: At his own request Father Kapaun is recommended for Army chaplaincy.

July 12, 1944: Relieved of pastorate at Pilsen and Auxiliary chaplaincy at Herington.

August 24, 1944: Chaplain School, Fort Devens, Mass.

Oct. 4, 1944: Graduated from Chaplain School.

Oct. 4, 1944: Chaplain at Camp Wheeler, Georgia.

Feb. 7, 1945: Ordered for overseas duty.

March 4, 1945: Left Miami Beach, Florida, for India, by plane.

March 8, 1945: Flew over Bethlehem.

March, 1945 to Sept. 18, 1945: Headquarters Northern Combat Area Command.

Sept. 18 to Nov. 22, 1945: 198th Ordnance Battalion.

Nov. 23, 1945 to April 15, 1946: India-Burma Theatre.

Oct. 1, 1945: Ledo, Province of Assam, India.

Nov. 30, 1945: New Delhi, India.

Jan. 3, 1946: Promoted to captaincy.

March 3, 1946: Sailed from Calcutta, India.

May 30, 1946: Arrived at San Francisco.

June 4, 1946: Separated from Active Service.

June 25, 1946: Private retreat at Conception, Missouri.

July 27, 1946: Terminal leave expired.

Aug. 1, 1946: Appointed temporary Administrator of St. John Church, Spearville, Kansas.

Aug. 23, 1946: Assistant at St. Theresa, Hutchinson.

Oct. 1, 1946: Registered at Catholic University, Washington, D. C.

May 6, 1947: Requested permission to take Reserve Officers Training.

June 28, 1947: One month Reserve Officers Training at Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.

Feb. 1948: M. A. in Education from Catholic University.

April 9, 1948: Appointed pastor of Timken, Kansas.

Sept. 25, 1948: Re-enlisted.

Nov. 15, 1948 to March 18, 1949: Fort Bliss, El Paso, Texas.

Dec. 26, 1949: Left Pilsen and parents for last time.

Jan. 3, 1950: Fort Lawton, Seattle, Wash.

Jan. 23, 1950: Sailed from Seattle.

Feb. 7, 1950: Arrived at Yokohama, Japan.

June 1, 1950: Stationed near Mt. Fuji, Japan. Alerted for combat.

July 11, 1950: "Tomorrow we are going into combat."

Sept. 2, 1950: Awarded Bronze Star medal.

Nov. 2, 1950: Captured by Chinese Communists.

May 6, 1951: Died in prison camp hospital, Pyoktong, Korea.

August 18, 1951: Awarded Distinguished Service Cross.

Oct. 17, 1952: Awarding of Medals "in absentia" to Bishop Carroll in home parish of Pilsen.

July 29, 1953: Memorial Mass, St. Mary Cathedral, Wichita, Kansas.

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