

Canadian Catholic Chaplains in the Great War

1914-1918

BY
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For nearly a century after the accession of William III there were no Catholics in the British Army. They were allowed to enlist, however, during the reign of George III. Sir John Burgoyne in the Seven Years War had under his command a regiment composed almost wholly of Catholics. In 1776-77-78 the loyalist Highlanders of New York State moved to Canada. Father John McKenna, who in 1773 had led them to Johnstown, accompanied them and, we are told by Governor-General Sir Guy Carleton, "went as chaplain to partys of R. C. Royalists and Indians upon the expedition to Fort Stanwix." Though contrary to army regulations of the time, Father McKenna was paid an annual stipend for his services. He was apparently the first Catholic chaplain of the British forces in the eighteenth century. Father Edmund Burke, later Vicar-Apostolic of Nova Scotia, was appointed chaplain of the soldiers at Niagara in 1798, and was thus the second army chaplain in Canadian annals.

The third Canadian chaplain was apparently the first in modern times who was gazetted to a regiment serving in the home forces. This was Father Alexander Macdonell, later first Bishop of Kingston, Ont. In 1794 he raised the Glengarry Fencibles in Scotland, composed entirely of Catholics. After their emigration to Glengarry in Canada, Father Macdonell was also instrumental in raising the Glengarry Light Infantry Fencibles, with which he served in the war of 1812-1815.

The question of Catholic chaplains in the British Army came to the fore in the Crimean War. Frederick Lucas, M.P., the founder of the "Tablet," and Cardinal-to-be Manning urged the point most forcibly. Then for the first time Catholic chaplains were given recognition in the army and navy establishments.

When the Great War broke out in 1914 the Canadian Bishops were faced with the matter of providing priests for the forces both at home and overseas. There were at the time but few priests connected with the Canadian Militia. Of these one, Father Peter O'Leary, had served in the South African War. The Minister of Defence, Sir Sam Hughes, allowed six priests to go overseas with the First Contingent. These were, in addition to Father O'Leary, Father Jolicœur of St. Catherine, P. Q., Father J. A. Fortier, O.M.I., of Quebec,

Father Sylvestre and Father W. Workman, O.F.M., of Montreal, and Father Doe of London, Ont.

It was certain that more priests would be required. The Bishops sent circulars to their clergy, secular and regular, and many volunteered. However, with the exception of battalions of infantry which were entirely Catholic, or Catholic as to the majority, and these were comparatively few, priests could not be appointed battalion chaplains. The needs of the soldiers mobilized in Canada were looked after by the appointment of local clergy to take care of them. Through Archbishop Bruchesi of Montreal and Bishop Fallon of London a list of priests who had volunteered was sent to the Minister of Defence, who used his own discretion in sending overseas more Catholic chaplains.

The result of this haphazard system was a scarcity of Catholic chaplains. During 1915 fourteen more priests were sent overseas. With two divisions in France and two more in England, this was far from sufficient. However, in 1916 an addition of thirty-two was made to the number of chaplains abroad. But, while even yet there were not enough priests overseas for the requirements, the Minister of Defence arbitrarily forbade any more chaplains of any kind to be sent from Canada. With battalions being broken up for reinforcements there was a superfluity of Protestant chaplains in England. But no distinction was made. The representations of the Catholic chaplains in 1917, when only two crossed up to July, resulted in an increased supply of priests. Thirteen were sent over in the latter part of this year and twenty-four more in 1918. There were seventy-three in England and France at the Armistice. The total number of priests enlisted was one hundred and one. All but eleven of these served overseas.

The chaplains were from the following dioceses and religious communities: Quebec, 7; Halifax, 7; London, 7; Pembroke, 6; Toronto, 5; Antigonish, 5; Ottawa, 4; Montreal, 3; Calgary, 3; St. John, N. B., 3; Kingston, 3; St. Boniface, 2; Victoria, 2; Peterborough, 2; Charlottetown, 2; and one each from Alexandria, Chatham, Haileybury, Hamilton, Joliette, Nicolet, Sherbrooke, Regina and Vancouver; four from dioceses in the United States; one from Australia; eight Oblates of Mary Immaculate; five Jesuits (one of France); four Franciscans; three Dominicans; two Redemptorists; two Basilians; one Benedictine and one Sulpician.

The need of an Army Bishop in Canada was such that eventually the Holy See, in August, 1918, named to this post the Bishop of Valleyfield, the Most Rev. Medard Emard. He in turn appointed a Vicar-General in Canada and another in England from among the chaplains. But the war was almost over when this action was taken.

The lack of this authority in spiritual matters previously was adjusted by the fact that the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster had jurisdiction over all the overseas chaplains. But there remained the difficulty that in a purely

military sense Catholic priests were subordinated to ministers of other faiths. These officers were as a rule considerate and fair. Nevertheless there was at first ground for complaints, especially with regard to reinforcements and a proportionate establishment. This was to some extent remedied at the beginning of 1916 with the appointment of a Senior Catholic chaplain in France, who determined appointments, changes and promotions, without any interference. It was only a year later that the appointment of a Catholic Assistant in London took place. Nominally he was subordinate to the Anglican Director, but actually he had complete charge of all the chaplains overseas.

When the question of administration had thus been settled, the matter of an increase in the establishment came up. The British establishment at first allowed seventeen chaplains per division. Of these three at least were Catholics, one for each brigade of infantry. When a brigade had a battalion that was entirely Catholic, there could be two priests in that brigade. Later a chaplain was allowed for the divisional artillery, and still later for the engineers of each division. While the First Canadian Division went to France in 1915 with only two chaplains, and the Second was similarly handicapped, by 1918 each division had at least five chaplains, and in the Corps as a whole there were twenty-four.

Outside the Corps proper were the Line of Communication Troops: (in 1918) four Casualty Clearing Hospitals; twelve General Hospitals; bases and reinforcement camps; Railway and Forestry Battalions. One of the three chaplains at each hospital was always a Catholic. Five chaplains were given to the thirteen railway battalions, and four to the Forestry units, in addition to three base chaplains.

In England the establishment allowed one for each hospital, one for five hundred troops in camp (in large camps, one per thousand), one for each group of three thousand Forestry troops, and three for the London area.

It was regrettable that the later adjustments were not in force from the beginning of the war. No doubt in the early stages some Catholic soldiers did not have all the attention they deserved, and the chaplains were badly overworked. The change in the office of the Defense Ministry meant a great deal for Catholic chaplains and soldiers overseas.

Col. Almond, the Director of Chaplain Service, an Anglican, once remarked that the Catholic chaplains were "hand-picked men." The compliment was indeed deserved, but in fact the picking merely consisted in their choice by their superiors out of many more equally endowed who had volunteered, because of their physical capacity, their good judgment, tact and initiative, their knowledge of at least two modern languages, and, of course, their moral integrity. They were usually about thirty years of age, with some experience in pastoral work, though quite a few had been recently ordained. That they measured up to the hopes of their superiors is generally

acknowledged. Though usually new to army life, they quickly accommodated themselves to their environment, and plunged into the work with keenest zeal. Their presence with the troops was welcomed by the military authorities, not only from the point of view of the religious needs of Canadian soldiers, but because chaplains were of service to the cause in keeping up the morale of the troops.

Eighteen of the priests won decorations or were mentioned in dispatches. Lt. Col. Workman received the Military Cross and was made a Commander of the Order of the British Empire. The Distinguished Service Order was given to Lt. Col. French and to Major Madden. The latter previously had won the Military Cross, which decoration was awarded also to Lt. Col. Fortier, Majors MacGillivray, McCarthy and Tompkins, Capts. E. J. MacDonald, R. A. MacDonell, C. A. Fallon, Nicholson, O'Sullivan and Murray. Father Murray moreover was given a "bar" to his M. C. Majors J. J. O'Gorman and Knox were made Officers of the Order of the British Empire. Captain Carleton was granted the Belgian Croix de Guerre. Fathers French, Fortier, Lockary and Letang were mentioned in dispatches, the first-named twice. Fathers O'Leary and Knox were "brought to the notice of the Secretary of State for War for valuable services rendered in connection with the war." Father Beausoleil, while in the French army before he became a Canadian chaplain, won the French Croix de Guerre.

The list of decorations does not correspond with the recommendations forwarded by the commanding officers of units. Not all of these could be acted on, as the number of awards was necessarily limited. And furthermore heroic actions often passed unobserved. Happily the above list of names comprises all the chaplains who were at the front for upwards of two years or more. But every chaplain who served any considerable time in the line deserved a decoration, in view of the heroism displayed in carrying on day after day in the face of danger. Several priests were wounded, though only one was disabled and one killed.

Writers or speakers sometimes remark of certain soldiers that they were fearless. Only the exceptional man could be so regarded. Of course one became in time accustomed to shellfire, and perhaps to some extent a fatalist, or, if a good Christian, resigned to the designs of Providence, and accordingly went about his duty without being too much concerned with the danger of the moment. The number of narrow escapes was remarkable. It was impressed upon the chaplains that their lives were particularly valuable, as they could not be easily replaced. But while exercising reasonable precautions, there were times when risks had to be incurred. "When duty calls," wrote one priest, "I know I can count on the help of One Who has never failed me yet." Shortly after, he died in the mud of Flanders in 1917. He was the Irish Jesuit, Father William Doyle.

Father Doyle spoke self-deprecatingly of himself "I am not foolhardy,

nor do I expose myself to danger unnecessarily; the coward is too strong in me for that." The bravest men were often those who admitted their shrinking from danger. Soldiers were not all equally equipped with nerves of steel. It is of record, on the testimony of his friend and fellow-chaplain, Father Fortier, that the one Canadian priest who was killed at the front, Father Georges Crochetière, never succeeded in overcoming fear of danger. But Father Fortier added in his letter to the dead chaplain's Bishop, Mgr. Brunault of Nicolet, "Nevertheless he never flinched, and duty was for him sufficient order to be everywhere."

As chaplain of the 22nd battalion, the one entirely Catholic unit in the Corps, he necessarily accompanied them even to the front line of trenches. The battalion was in the line south of Arras in Easter week, 1918. The chaplain met his death the Tuesday after Easter, while in the support trenches, about a thousand yards from the enemy. While he was lying down in a hut used as a dressing-station after attending to some wounded soldiers, he was instantly killed by a shell that fell in their midst. Father E. J. Macdonald of the 4th brigade was called to him. He describes the scene:

"The ambulance men, the men of his own battalion, and in fact any who came in contact with him, spoke of him as a kind and real father. It was a sad sight to witness the cruel work of execution of that German shell, but one realized that here was a priest who had died doing a priest's work, and no more need be said in his praise. One expression, however, was used by many of his boys, and may serve to show us as priests, how our work is appreciated if done properly. 'He was a real father to us. He worked for us and we never had to go without Mass and the Sacraments.'"

One September day of 1916, after the First Canadian Division had gone into action on the Somme, some wounded Australians were discovered in a dug-out near Mouquet Farm. A party from the Field Ambulance set out to rescue them, but only the doctor and the chaplain were allowed to go forward at first. The priest confessed some of the men, and the doctor attended to their wounds. On the return trip the medical man was injured. Consequently when the next morning the stretcher-bearers were sent to bring in the wounded, the chaplain had to go with them to guide them. The communication trenches had been obliterated, and they were in full view of the enemy, who shelled the party deliberately. There was one stretcher too few, and the chaplain helped the Sergeant to carry one of the injured. A shrapnel burst caught them. The priest, Father John J. O' Gorman of Ottawa, was wounded in both legs and the left arm. He narrowly missed amputation of the arm, which became stiff at the elbow, and afterwards incapacitated him considerably.

Similar stories could be multiplied. One witness spoke of a certain priest

as being "the bravest man in the Canadian forces." The late Father Murray won the "bar" to the M. C., in front of Cambrai, in 1918, when his coat was riddled with machine-gun fire, as he attended to the dying on the field, though he came through untouched. At a military dinner after the war, Lt. Col. McGreer spoke of "a very vivid picture he had in mind of Father French in August 1918, going on hands and knees from place to place under heavy fire to look for seriously wounded." Of Father O'Sullivan who won the Military Cross at Valenciennes in November, 1918, the London Gazette wrote: "He went forward and attended wounded under heavy high explosive and gas shell fire, attending during the whole night to sappers who became casualties while at work." The same authority thus describes the deed of action for which Father Myles Tompkins was awarded the M. C. "He accompanied one battalion during the Somme operations, Sept. 16/22d, 1916, where he rendered most valuable services in bringing in wounded men from 'No Man's Land' and burying the dead, often at the risk of his own life, through gunfire and shells."

We have spoken only of those who are now dead. Much the same tale could be told of many other chaplains, decorated or not.

But these instances are of isolated actions. In times of crisis most men will rise to the occasion, buoyed up by various motives. Heroism was, however, just as evident if not more so in the patient performance of their duties by the chaplains in an environment that was not a bed of roses. Lord Tweedsmuir, in his recent autobiography, speaks of the repulsion that he experienced in enduring the discomforts of army life at the front. The sights of the stricken field and the hospitals were heart-breaking. The smells were nauseating. Rats and lice were everywhere. Mud and cold in the trenches and in the poor shelters of dug-outs were hard to bear. Long marches and lack of sleep, the limited diet of the rations, were other tiresome features of the life.

On the other hand, the priest found many comforts and consolations. "What a joy to be able to offer oneself entirely, even life itself, each morning at Mass, and to think that perhaps before evening He may have accepted the offering." What Father Doyle wrote, every priest felt. Often he had to celebrate in the open, or underground, in a dug-out, in trenches, in tents or "pill-boxes." An altar was improvised with anything handy: "A biscuit-box on two German bayonets." The sacred vestments frequently were wet through or mud-spattered. But never in his life would the priest say Mass more fervently. Every day he had the privilege of carrying upon his heart the Blessed Sacrament, to be ready at any time to give the Bread of the Strong to those hungering for it.

Confessions were no longer a burden but a joy. There could be no doubt of the dispositions of those men who lined up to take their turn. Or when in haste it was necessary to give General Absolution, what a magnificent spectacle, what a sense it gave of the terrific power bestowed upon priests!

And when he was called upon to prepare a man to die, how consoling the gratitude! "Oh Father, I can die happy now. Thanks be to God for His goodness in sending you."

It is evident that the men were glad to see their chaplain at any time. His rank made no difference. In their eyes he ranked higher as a priest than as an officer. "Catholics' familiarity and instant friendship with a new priest is a standing marvel to Protestants," observed one chaplain. The conditions seemed to make the men more accessible to the priests. Church parades; access to lists of men giving religious denomination; the pride and zeal that some showed in bringing slackers among their comrades to the chaplains; good example; deaths of comrades; these and many other reasons might be adduced to explain why most of the chaplains had the repeated experience of hearing the confessions of men who had not been to the Sacraments for years.

Some needed instruction, had not made their First Communion or been confirmed. There were as well a certain number of non-Catholics who for one reason or another asked for instructions and to be received into the Church. The number of such is not on record but it must have been considerable. In a note-book of the late Father James Fallon, O.M.I., there is a list of twenty-four names of men who received their First Communion from him in West Sandling Camp, England, and an equal number of others who were baptized by him. Bishop Fallon of London, Ont., confirmed several soldiers when he made a visit to the troops in 1918.

There certainly was an awakening of the faith in many hearts where it had lain dormant. Father Doyle told of a "black sheep" whom he had difficulty in making any impression on. One day in May he met the man, a morose character. He said: "This is the month of May; you surely won't refuse Our Blessed Lady." The poor fellow dropped to his knees and went to confession.

Father De la Taille, S.J., the famous theologian who died in Rome a few years ago, and who was the chaplain of the Canadian Cavalry, though a native of France, told a remarkable fact about one of his casualties in a letter to his superior, Father French. "As one of the ambulances was leaving the aid post I asked the men inside, five in number, whether there were any Catholics amongst them. One of them said he was not, three of them said they were, and I gave them Sacraments, but there remained the fifth man who could not speak and answer my question intelligently. Seeing that I could not interpret the poor, faint sounds he uttered, he dipped his fingers into his blood and wrote on the side of the car: 'Yes.'"

The chaplains were given extraordinary faculties by the Holy See. They could give General Absolution to any number of men when there was not time for individual confessions. They could absolve from all censures and reserved cases. They could celebrate Mass in any decent place, even underground. When necessary they were allowed to say two or even three Masses on Sundays and feasts of obligation, up to one hour after noon; and

in extraordinary cases though they had broken their fast. The men, of course, could receive Communion at the front though not fasting, and in fact more communions were given in the evenings than in the mornings, as then the men were freer to visit the chapels, where there were any. If not close to a chapel, the chaplain carried the Blessed Sacrament with him, so that he could give Holy Communion at any time. Finally, all priests were permitted to exempt themselves from the recitation of the daily Office, though most of them did not take frequent advantage of the permission.

Usually at the front the chaplain remained out of the line, as not all of his four infantry battalions would be in the advanced trenches at the same time. Occasionally, of course, he made his way forward. There was always something that could be done there. But for the greater part of the time he had to make use of the opportunity when some of his battalions were in reserve to accommodate them with Mass and the Sacraments. Usually the soldier had two Sundays in the month for Mass, though sometimes other duties interfered. An experienced priest wrote: "To show that where there is good-will the soldiers have no lack of religious aids, I have had soldiers of the brigade to which I was attached receive Holy Communion without fail every fortnight." The parade Masses were announced in battalion orders, and no obstacle was put in the way by those in authority, where possible.

During engagements the chaplains were posted to regimental aid posts or dressing-stations to look after the wounded. Generally the infantry chaplains worked with the battalion medical officers and stretcher-bearers. Artillery chaplains took charge of the dressing-stations. Further back, there were other priests at the casualty clearing stations and the base hospitals. Other chaplains looked after the burial of the dead.

During 1917 a system of weekly reports was organized. During nine months of this year there were 99,584 Communions; 65,094 Confessions; 1820 parade Masses; 3747 other religious services; 4614 received the last Sacraments; 1366 were buried with Catholic rites.

From the first the chaplains experienced the need of some organized body to supply them and their men with facilities for religious service in the camps, social centres such as were conducted by the Y.M.C.A., and articles of devotion, reading matter, etc. The Catholic Women's League of England did a great deal for our forces as well as for their own troops. But when Major the Rev. J. J. O'Gorman was invalided to Canada in December, 1917, he undertook during his convalescence the work of founding the Catholic Army Huts, in conjunction with leaders of the Knights of Columbus. The large sums raised by this organization in 1917-1918 provided the chaplains with chapel-huts, chapel-tents, and various articles of use in their work. Splendid clubs were opened in London and administered by the chaplains of the area. The Bexhill Library, under Mr. Reed-Lewis, who had two sons in the Canadian forces, provided abundant reading material of a desirable kind. After

the Armistice much more could be done in France and Belgium than during hostilities. The huts at Etaples and Le Havre were kept busy during the months of evacuation, when their slogan was "Everything Free."

Simply incalculable is the amount of good done by the opening of the huts in the various camps. They vastly increased the efficiency of the chaplains, and they left a good impression even in the minds of non-Catholics concerning the Knights of Columbus and the Catholic Church. Lacking such establishment as the Y.M.C.A. enjoyed, the C.A.H. had to call on the chaplains to administer their funds. The Canadian Secretary, Mr. J. L. Murray, acknowledged the magnitude of their work. "Their record of service will go down in history as marking the capability, business sagacity and devotion to duty of a small but important body of Canadian priests." The military authorities also bestowed upon the chaplains for this phase of their work splendid testimonials.

The erection of the Holy Name Society in the Canadian forces was another unique work of unlimited benefit. The organizer, Father R. A. MacDonell, O.S.B., and the other chaplains who cooperated with him were encouraged in their work by General Currie. Large numbers of Catholic soldiers were enrolled formally, and the crusade did a lot of good as well among the men of the various other denominations.

The six priests who accompanied the First Division to England endured with the troops the memorable hardships of that winter on Salisbury Plain. In March, 1915, Fathers Sylvestre and Doe went with the division to Belgium, where they experienced the ghastly surprise gas attack in April. With the reinforcements that soon after came from England, Father Fortier arrived on the scene, attached to the Cavalry and Horse Artillery, with which he was to spend the rest of the war. Father Workman joined the first brigade in June. The first priest, however, to reach France was Father Jolicoeur, who had come with the 2nd Stationary Hospital to Boulogne in December, 1914. Father O'Leary also, but later, joined a hospital in France.

The new chaplains of 1915 numbered fourteen. They were Fathers J. N. Desjardins, Guay and Lizotte of Quebec; Father Doyon, O.P., the chaplain of the 22nd battalion; Fathers McPherson, McGillivray and Tompkins of Antigonish; Fathers McCarthy of London, Killoran of Montreal, Thornton of Halifax, Madden, O.M.I., of Vancouver, Arts, a Belgian priest, Knox of Vancouver, recently ordained in Dublin, and Mgr. A. E. Burke, P. A., of Toronto, who for a time acted unofficially as the Catholic assistant to the Principal Chaplain, Col. Steacy, in London.

When the 2nd division went to France in September, 1915, it had Father Doyon with the 22nd, and Father Guay, who was supposed to look after the other eleven battalions, an impossible task. However, Father McGillivray soon was sent to the 4th brigade, while Father Guay took the sixth, and Father Doyon did all he could for the fifth. Fathers Killoran and Madden

replaced Fathers Sylvestre and Doe, who were given hospital work behind the lines. Fathers Lizotte and McPherson went to Canadian hospitals attached to the Gallipoli expedition. Towards the end of the year Father Workman was chosen by his colleagues to act as Catholic assistant to the Senior Chaplain of the Corps, though he remained with the 1st brigade for some months longer.

The third division went to France early in 1916. Father McCarthy was sent to the Princess Patricias of the 7th brigade, with which battalion he served for the rest of the war, two years and eight months, a longer period than any other of the chaplains spent at the front except Father Fortier. Father Knox took the 8th brigade, and Father Tompkins the 9th. As part of the cavalry brigade was united with the 5th British cavalry division, Father Fortier went with them.

The Corps chaplains in 1916 made strong representations to the authorities on various matters. One of these was remedied when Father Workman went to Corps Headquarters and was officially recognized as superior of the Catholic chaplains. The question of a second chaplain for the fifth brigade was not adjusted till late in the year. A fuller establishment gradually came about. New chaplains arrived in England in 1916 to the number of thirty-two, though a few of the older priests had to return to Canada. The new priests were Fathers French, Letang and Murray of Pembroke; J. J. O'Gorman and Carleton of Ottawa; F. Costello and Lowrey of London; Lockary of St. John; Murdock of Chatham; R. MacDonald and Gillis of Antigonish; McQuillan and O'Sullivan of Halifax; E. J. Macdonald of Alexandria; Nicholson of Kingston; A. B. Coté of Peterborough; P. MacDonald of Charlottetown; Staley of Toronto; Pirot of Regina; Chartier of Sherbrooke; Crochetière of Nicolet; Bouillon of St. Boniface; Bradley of Victoria; R. A. Macdonell, O.S.B., of Fort Augustus, Scotland; Pickett, C.S.B.; Hingston, Paquin, and de la Taille, S.J., the last-named a French citizen; Daniel, Labonté, Gauvreau and J. Fallon, O.M.I.

Changes brought Father Lockary to the 1st and J. J. O'Gorman to the 3rd brigades of the First Division. Fathers Carleton, French, J. N. Desjardins and Letang went to the 2nd. The Third Division saw Fathers Thornton and Labonté replacing successively Father Knox. The Fourth Division came out in August with Fathers McQuillan, Daniel and R. A. MacDonell. Those replaced took up work either in England or in hospitals in France. The only chaplain wounded during the year was Father O'Gorman, in September, and his successor with the 3rd brigade was Father de la Taille.

The year was marked by severe fighting in Belgium in early June. In August the Corps moved to the Somme. Here for over two months the Canadian divisions were engaged in prolonged and costly battle actions. At their close Father McQuillan was replaced in the tenth brigade by Father Murray. Early in 1917 chaplains were given to the divisional artillery units.

Father Pickett to the 1st, Father Fortier to the 2nd, Father F. Costello to the 3rd, Father Gillis to the 4th, and Father Hingston, later, to the 5th divisional artillery. Father de la Taille went to the Cavalry, Father Labonté to the 3rd brigade, and Father Lowrey to the 8th.

In spite of the order of the Minister of Militia forbidding chaplains to go overseas, two priests arrived in England early in 1917, Fathers J. R. O'Gorman of Haileybury and Gaudet of St. John, N. B. Shortly afterwards they went to France with the battalions of railway and forestry workers whom they had accompanied from Canada. But it was not until after a change in March at London Headquarters, when Col. Steacy was replaced by Col. Almond, and Mgr. Burke relieved by Father Workman (Father French succeeding the latter in France at Corps), that more chaplains began to arrive from Canada in sufficient numbers. These were: Fathers Hussey and White of London; C. O'Gorman of Pembroke; Doyle of Toronto; Woods of Victoria; Hawks of Philadelphia, Pa.; McCallion of Halifax; P. Costello, C.S.B.; Moore, O.F.M.; Planet and C. Fallon, O.M.I.

During the year several of the chaplains were decorated and some obtained their majority. Changes included the posting of Father E. J. MacDonald to the 4th brigade, Fathers McGillivray and Crochetière to the 5th brigade, Nicholson to the 8th, P. A. MacDonald to the 11th, while Father Carleton went to the 3rd Artillery, Father C. Fallon to the 5th and Father Hussey to the 8th Railway Troops.

This year saw some of the severest fighting experienced by the Corps. Vimy in April, Lens in August, and Passchendaele in October and November, were great Canadian triumphs. Some of the chaplains were wounded slightly or fell ill, but nearly all returned to their posts eventually. The increase in numbers allowed the Senior Chaplains to staff the Corps completely, and to man the hospitals and other units of the Line of Communications.

Father J. J. O'Gorman, who had been invalided to Canada in December, 1916, and who had done much work there in regard to the establishment and the recruitment of chaplains, returned to England in November, 1917, and took over the post of Secretary-Treasurer overseas of the Catholic Army Huts, which he had organized while at home. This position he occupied for twelve months, until he was named Deputy Assistant Director for the Lines of Communication in France.

With 1918 the Corps and the Chaplain Service faced its sternest test. The German attacks in the spring, the counterattacks that followed until the Armistice, created new problems in a war of movement. Some of the chaplains again were wounded slightly, Fathers Madden (twice), Tompkins and O'Reilly, while Father Nicholson was gassed. Father Crochetière was killed, April 2.

During the year the troops were visited by the Most Rev. M. F. Fallon, Bishop of London, and the Most Rev. G. Gauthier, auxiliary Bishop of

Montreal. Some of the soldiers were confirmed by the Bishops.

The last year of the war saw a further increase of the establishment. Four chaplains were appointed to the newly organized brigades of engineers. To the Heavy Artillery another was named, which brought the number in the Corps to twenty-four. Other chaplains were sent to various Railway and Forestry units, and all the hospitals, base and reinforcement camps were filled. In England likewise sufficient chaplains were obtained for all the principal posts, while smaller posts were attended by English priests of the vicinity in the pay of the Army.

Those who arrived in 1918 were: Fathers O'Reilly and Meagher of Kingston; M. J. O'Gorman and Sammon of Pembroke; Hetherington and A. B. MacDonald of Calgary; Stanton and J. J. Desjardins of Ottawa; Cannon and G. Coté of Quebec; P. J. Kelly of Peterborough; Goodrow of Hamilton; W. J. Kelly of Toronto; Curran of Halifax; Corcoran of London; Rooney of Charlottetown; Ducharme of Joliette; Maltais and Phaneuf, O.F.M., Hamel, P.S.S., Lamarre, O.P., Lacouture, S.J.; Beausoleil of Calgary; and Laws, a priest from Australia.

During the year, in the First Division, Fathers White, O'Reilly, Murdock and Beausoleil; in the Second Division, Fathers J. J. Desjardins, Maltais, Gaudet and G. Coté; in the Third Division, Fathers A. B. Coté, P. Costello and P. Kelly; in the Fourth Division, Father C. Fallon, served for several months. Fathers McPherson, A. B. MacDonald, White and Woods relieved in the Artillery. The engineer brigades were staffed by Fathers O'Sullivan, Labonté, Staley and J. R. O'Gorman. Fathers Hawks, Moore and Doyle went to the Railway Troops, and Fathers Pirot and M. J. O'Gorman to Forestry Battalions. Fathers J. P. Fallon, Curran, Bouillon, Gauvreau, Hamel, W. J. Kelly, Lacouture, R. MacDonald, Meagher, C. O'Gorman, Paquin, Planet, Rooney and Stanton also served for a time with various Lines of Communication formations. Father Bradley was transferred to the troops of the Murmansk expedition, after a period in France. Father O'Brien of Montreal accompanied Canadian troops to Siberia.

The remaining priests, who were kept in England, some having arrived even after the Armistice, were meanwhile doing a very good work caring for the soldiers in the reserve camps and in the hospitals, while a particularly valuable part was played by the priests put in charge of the hostels in London. The same may be said of the chaplains who served only in Canada. These were Fathers Belliveau, Comeau, Cooney, C.S.S.R., Dumas, W. T. Kelly, Murphy, O'Hare, C.S.S.R., Olivier, O.P., Roche, Summers and Sigouin, S.J. Father Fortier replaced Father French as D.A.D.C.S., on the Rhine, in 1919, and was the third chaplain to be promoted to Lieutenant Colonel in the field.

This summary completes the outstanding facts in the history of the Canadian Catholic Chaplain Service in the war of 1914-1918. It may be of interest to make a comparison of the organization of the chaplain service in the

present war with the foregoing. In the first place a great advantage was secured with the appointment by the Holy See of the Most Rev. C. L. Nelligan, D.D., Bishop of Pembroke, to head the chaplains, and his nomination subsequently by the Ministry of National Defense as Principal Chaplain (R.C.) with the rank of Lt. Colonel. This guaranteed that all Catholic chaplains of the Navy, Army and Air Forces would be completely independent of the Protestant chaplain service.

The next move created eleven posts in as many districts in Canada for the Army; six for the Air Force and two for the Navy, to which were named priests of senior rank, many of them experienced in the last war. A chaplain was allowed for every group of five hundred in a district. The same establishment for troops in the field as existed at the end of the last war was authorized. The net result is that at the time of writing, Oct. 1, 1940, there are 84 chaplains with the forces, besides nearly half as many part-time chaplains. Twenty-four are overseas, and in Canada there are 46 with the Army, ten with the Air Force and four with the Navy. There are also twelve full-time chaplains about to be appointed to twelve training centres in Quebec.

Several of the chaplains of the last war are again in the services, two of whom, Fathers McCarthy and G. Coté, are in England. Several more of our new chaplains served in the last war as combatants. The calibre of the new chaplains is clearly such that we may expect them to keep pace with the traditions so splendidly established by the chaplains of the first Great War, twenty-three of whom, as Pope Benedict XV said on a certain occasion, are now "Decorated in Heaven."

B I B L I O G R A P H Y

By Assistant Director of Chaplain Services, O.M.F.C.

Report to the Canadian Hierarchy, 1918.

Report to the Canadian Army Bishop, 1919.

Department of National Defence: Records of Service.