

Military Chaplains: A Few Among Many



Fr. Francis Duffy, Army (right)
w/ Col. "Wild Bill" O'Donovan



Msgr. Thomas Sandi, Air Force



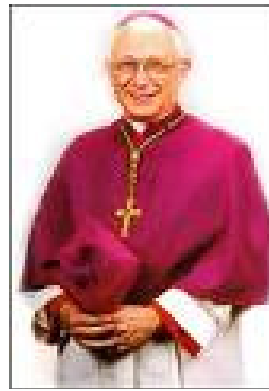
Fr. John O'Connor, Navy
(Later, Archbishop of NY)



Fr. Angelo Roncalli
(Later, Pope Jn. XXIII)
Italy



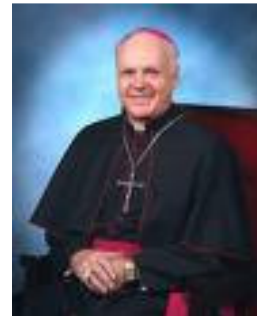
Fr. Pierre Teilhard
de Chardin, France



Bishop Robert Brucato
Air Force



Fr. Emil Kapaun, Army
P.O.W.



Card. Francis Spellman, Apb. Timothy Broglio Apb. Edwin O'Brien
Archbishops for the Military Services, Civilians



Fr. Kieran Mandato
Navy



George Fox, Methodist
Alex Goode, Jewish
Clark Poling, Reformed Church
Fr. John Washington, Catholic
Army



Msgr. Kevin Randall
Air Force



Fr. Vin. Capodanno
Maryknoll
Navy

Reflections of a French soldier-priest and stretcher bearer

Hersin-Coupigny
7th October 1915

... I made a tour of the trenches on the eve of the attack to people I knew and to give communion to some (all to whom I offered it, accepted; I was limited by the smallness of my pyx). You can't imagine what emotions I then experienced, nor what one feels is conveyed in the clasp of a man who shakes one's hand, at a bend in a communications trench, after one has given him God – while the shells are going across, almost like a solid vault overhead, with a continual hum, on their way to demolish the trenches 200 meters further on, the trenches we'll have to move into as soon as the bombardment stops. There's no doubt about it: The only man who knows [who experiences] right in the innermost depths of his being the weight and grandeur of war, is the man who goes over the top with bayonet and grenade. In that moment training, of course, and a sort of intoxication play a large part; but even so it is still true that the infantryman leaving his trench for the attack is a man apart, a man who has lived a minute of life of which other men have simply no conception at all.

I am ashamed, as you may imagine, to think that I stayed in the communication trenches while my friends went out to their death. So many of them never came back – first among them, my best friend in the regiment, and the finest soldier I've yet known, poor Commandant Lefebvre ...

What is going to emerge from this ghastly struggle? It's more and more the crisis, the desperately slow evolution of a rebirth of Europe. Yet could things move any more quickly? ... We must offer our existence to God, who neither wastes nor spoils, but rather makes use, better than we could ever anticipate, of the struggles in which we are enveloped. If I said I didn't feel any weariness, I wouldn't be speaking the truth. As soon as the trenches lose the attraction of novelty, you easily become heartily sick of them – particularly, perhaps, when, like me, the work you've given yourself to involves witnessing all the miseries, one after another, without sharing in the battle or victory. Pray to God the he may give me the strength to hold out as long as he should wish me to. When the regiment, for the third time, fills up with new faces, it's hard work to start making friends again, to form relationships, in the hopes of being able to give someone words of advice or absolution when the next attack comes. God grant that we may remain his workers to the end.

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Excerpted from a letter written to his cousin, Marguerite from by **Father Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, SJ**, (1881-1955)

A Priestly Meditation

To the full extent of my power, because I am a priest,
I wish from now on to be the first to become conscious of all that the world loves, pursues and suffers.

I want to be the first to seek, to suffer, and to sympathize;
the first to unfold and sacrifice myself;
to become more widely human, and more nobly of the earth than any of the world's servants.