

# THE CHURCH MEETS WAR

## NUNS FILL MANY NEW ROLES IN WARTIME AMERICA

By Thomas F. Doyle  
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Least publicized of the nation's women volunteers, Catholic nuns are filling many new roles in wartime America. Many are serving as air-raid wardens, operating farm tractors, teaching American youth the science of aeronautics. In addition to their usual tasks of religious instruction, teaching nursing and welfare work.

One of the most important contributions nuns are making is in the field of research studies important to the national effort. This work is being largely concentrated at the Institution Divi Thomae, scientific research establishment founded by Archbishop John T. McNichols, O.F.M., at Cincinnati, Ohio, under the direction of the eminent scientist, Dr. George Sperti Sperti.

Senior scientists have helped to develop biodyne ointment, a new "wound" preparation which has been used with remarkable success by doctors and hospitals throughout the country in the treatment of burns. Expected to prove valuable in the treatment of soldiers suffering from this type of wound, preliminary reports on biodyne have been sent to the War Department and the National Research Council.

### IMMEDIATE RELIEF

Biodyne is made under a secret formula, including cast and liver oils. The Chicago fire department now carries five pounds of biodyne on each of its fire squad cars. It has been found far more effective and rapid than tannic acid in the treatment of burn cases. Biodyne gives immediate relief from pain, leaves no scars. In no case where it has been used has skin grafting been necessary.

Sister Mary Petronella Schroeder, C.P.P.S., professor on the staff of the Institute, recently reported a discovery regarded as particularly important at this time because of its possible effect on the country's supply of chlorine, which is needed in many war industries and in the production of certain types of synthetic rubber. It is estimated that from ten to fifteen thousand tons of chlorine are used annually for sterilization of sewage. Demonstrating on a laboratory scale that sewage can be sterilized by electrolysis with added salt, Sr. Petronella's method, if it proves feasible on a commercial scale, will release a vast quantity of chlorine for vital war needs.

Many nuns have undergone special training to equip them to teach new subjects related to war preparedness.

At St. Vincent's College in Latrobe, Pa., six Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill joined a class of army glider pilots and secondary school teachers in a pre-flight aviation course. The course included navigation, civil air regulations, the theory of motor construction and meteorology, and is part of the glider pilot program conducted for members of the enlisted reserve of the U. S. Army Air Corps. Both Sisters and teaching Brothers were enrolled in the aeronautical course at Loyola University of the South and at other Catholic colleges during the past summer.

The Ursuline College at New Rochelle, N. Y., plans to continue the series of courses begun a year ago to enable young women better to equip themselves for the present emergency. Among the courses are: Morse code, motor mechanics and map interpretation.

### TRAIN SPECIALISTS

The nuns on the faculties of Catholic colleges are also training nurses, physicians, chemists, dietitians and other specialists.

One institution—the College of Saint Teresa at Winona, Minnesota—has already done impressive work in preparing students for key roles in the national emergency. Graduates include thirty-one-year-old Mary Catherine Kelley, who was appointed by Governor Harold Strassen of Minnesota as State Director of Women's Services within the Welfare Division of the Civilian Defense Organization. Miss Kelley is in charge of 20,000 women, organized as Minnesota Victory Aides, and her work is to coordinate women's war efforts in the communities throughout the State.

Other graduates are working with the F. R. I. or occupy important positions in the USO or the Red Cross. One is a research worker in the Bureau of War Re-

search; another is teaching a special course in radio and physics in the Women's College, University of North Carolina. Seven young women have joined the teaching staff of the Signal Corps radio school in Chicago and are believed to be the vanguard of a future large force of women instructors in this branch of the U. S. Army.

### CITIZEN FARMERS' MISSION

Nuns have learned to farm with assistance through necessity, often by choice. The Sisters of Mount Alvernia, Reading, Pa., report that they have "adapted themselves wholeheartedly to agriculture pursuits." On the grounds of Nazareth College in Rochester, Sisters have been cultivating a large farm acreage.

Sometimes a shortage of farm labor has made it imperative for Sisters to turn their attention to agriculture on a large scale. This has meant work with a capital "W." At Mount Assisi Convent, Lomont, Ill., the nuns toiled under a hot sun last summer, harvesting the grain with baylons and rakes. Dressed in hot sewing black and white habit, Sister Mary Othello operated a farm tractor, probably the first nun in those parts to have manipulated this type of

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