Pope Sends Priests To U. S. Prisoners In Italy At Eastertide

VATICAN CITY (NC-Radio)—His Holiness Pope Pius XII arranged for English-speaking priests to visit, during the Paschal season, those centers in Italy where American soldiers are held prisoners of war, to assist the Catholics among them to prepare for the observance of Easter and for the fulfillment of their Easter duty.

Reflecting anew the Sovereign Pontiff's deep solicitude for the welfare of war prisoners, this fact, hence is but one element in a greatly accelerated and amplified service being rendered by the Vatican in this direction.

It is revealed now that in some transit camps, those places to which the prisoners of war are first brought upon arrival in Italy before being assigned to the more permanent establishments, the charity of the Sovereign Pontiff is generously relieving the most urgent needs of American prisoners, in the material as well as in the spiritual order.

Relatives Notified

It has been noted, moreover, that all the radio and courier services of the Vatican Information Office have greatly intensified their activities in recent days, that the families of the prisoners of war may the more speedily receive greetings and news of their separated men.

The office staff is following an extraordinary schedule, forwarding the work of notifying relatives of the arrival of prisoners of war in Italy, and of giving the earliest possible news to families of the actual transfer of their prisoner-relatives to prison camps.

Aid Given in Japan

It has been announced in recent days that the Vatican radio station has inaugurated a new transmission to the Apostolic Delegation in Japan for the Vatican Information Office, thus helping to obtain information on soldiers held prisoners of war in that country. This follows shortly after the announcement through the office of His Eminence Luigi Cardinal Maglione, Papal Secretary of State, that the Apostolic Delegate in Tokyo had visited the camp in Japan where American civilian internees were held prisoners and in the name of Pope Pius XII distributed to the internees money sent by the Bishops of the United States to the Holy Father for their relief. It was reported to Cardinal Maglione that the Americans were very grateful to the Holy Father for his paternal solicitude.

It has been made clear by Ecclesia, organ of the Vatican Information Office, that the varied activities of the Office are carried on for the benefit of military prisoners and civilian internees of all nations and all races, and that these efforts are applied everywhere the Office is permitted to do so.

Holy Father Asks U.S. Faithful Join Him In May Prayers For Peace

WASHINGTON (NC)—His Holiness Pope Pius XII has issued a special invitation to the Bishops, priests, Religious and faithful of the United States to join with him in prayer throughout the month of May.

The invitation to join with His Holiness in invoking the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary "for the needs of humanity and for the attainment of a just peace," was extended through His Eminence Luigi Cardinal Maglione, Papal Secretary of State, and has been communicated to the Archbishops and Bishops of the United States by His Excellency the Most Rev. Amleto Giovanni Cicognani, Apostolic Delegate to the United States.

Special Call to Children

His Excellency says the Holy Father "explicitly calls upon the school children for prayers during their May devotions," and that "especially in the pleading of these innocent souls," many of whose lives have been deeply affected by the war, "is there hope for the blessings of peace and mercy upon a disordered world."

The Apostolic Delegate's letter follows:

"Your Excellency:

"On Apr. 18, 1943, through His Eminence, the Cardinal Secretary of State, the Holy Father has requested that I invite Your Excellency and your faithful to join with him in prayer during the month of May. As in preceding years His Holiness will invoke the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary for the needs of humanity and for the attainment of a just peace. Realising that war is a consequence of the rejection of divine teachings the Sovereign Pontiff recommends a return to religion and honesty and earnestly exhorts all Catholics to consecrate themselves to the Heart of Mary in their resolution to lead a better life.

"His Holiness explicitly calls upon the school children for prayers during their May devotions. Especially in the pleadings of these innocent souls — many of whose lives have been deeply affected by the war — rising in mighty chorus before the throne of God is there hope for the blessings of peace and mercy upon a disordered world.

Prayer for Lasting Peace

"I am sure that Your Excellency will bring the invitation of the Holy Father to the attention of all your clergy, religious and faithful, so that with the Vicar of Christ all Catholics may join in an appeal that will be pleasing to Almighty God and will find its answer in the blessing of a speedy and lasting peace."

This invitation of His Holiness to Catholics to join with him in prayer in a special manner in the Month of Mary recalls that the Sovereign Pontiff consecrated the war-torn world to the Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary on Nov. 1 of last year, when he broadcast to Portugal a radio address that highlighted the closing exercises of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the apparition of the Blessed Virgin at Fatima. The Holy Father made a part of that address a prayer of his own composition, to which he later attached indulgences. This prayer invokes the intercession of the "Queen of the Most Holy Rosary, Refuge of the Human Race, Victress in all God's battles."

Vatican Radio Starts Series of Regular Broadcasts To Russia

LONDON — Vatican Radio has started, for the first time, a series of regular broadcasts to Russia. The first broadcast went out April 19 and there will be a broadcast every Monday night in future, the station announced in its English program.

Simultaneously with the news of the Russian broadcast came news of a new prayer, given in a decree of the Sacred Penitentiary, which seems to have a direct bearing in the Vatican's new move. The prayer, to which the Holy Father has attached an indulgence of 300 days, with a plenary indulgence once a month on the usual conditions, was published in the Acta Apostolicae Sedis (No. 3) and, as given by Vatican Radio, is as follows:

"O Most Holy Trinity, we adore Thee, and through Mary offer Thee our petition: Grant to all unity in the Faith and courage to profess it faithfully."

The Catholic population of Hanyang City, China, has multiplied fifty times over a period of twenty years, according to the annual report issued by Bishop Edward J. Galvin.

Military Vicar Participates In Solemn Holy Land Rites

JERUSALEM (NC)—Colorful scenes were enacted in Palestine as Catholics and Orthodox dissidents observed Holy Week and Easter, the Jews observed their feast of the Passover, and the Mohammedans theirs of Nebi Musa.

Conspicuous at the Christian ceremonies were the uniforms of many American soldiers who participated, but the principal American touch was given by the presence in the Holy Land of the Most Rev. Francis J. Spellman, Archbishop of New York and Military Vicar of the American Armed Forces.

Among the Americans present in Jerusalem to participate in the solemn rites were a number of U. S. Army airmen from Egypt, the majority of whom were guests of the Franciscan Fathers at Terra Santa College.

Repair Work Suspended

Repair work which is being done in the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre was temporarily suspended and the faithful were admitted in [illegible] the Most Rev. [illegible] [illegible] restricted numbers for the Easter rites.

Archbishop Spellman arrived at the Apostolic Delegation on Wednesday and was greeted by ecclesiastical and civic officials. On Good Friday, His Excellency led a procession comprised chiefly of American soldiers over the Via Dolorosa. On Easter Sunday the American prelate pontificated at Solemn Mass in the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre at the invitation of His Excellency the Most Rev. Luigi Barlassina, Patriarch of Jerusalem.

Assisting Archbishop Spellman at the Mass were two American chaplains, the Rev. James Carey, of the Archdiocese of Newark, and the Rev. Francis Singleton, of the Diocese of Monterey-Fresno.

After celebrating Mass Monday in the Basilica of the Nativity at Bethlehem, Archbishop Spellman was to visit Thabor, Nazareth and the Sea of Galilee. Tuesday he was to go to Damascus and Beirut and visit with His Eminence Ignatius Gabriel Cardinal Tappouni, Patriarch of Antioch; His Excellency, Apostolic Delegate to Syria, and His Excellency Gregory Peter XV Agagianian, Armenian Patriarch, who is a personal friend and with whom Archbishop Spellman became acquainted in his days in Rome.

Visits Army Hospital

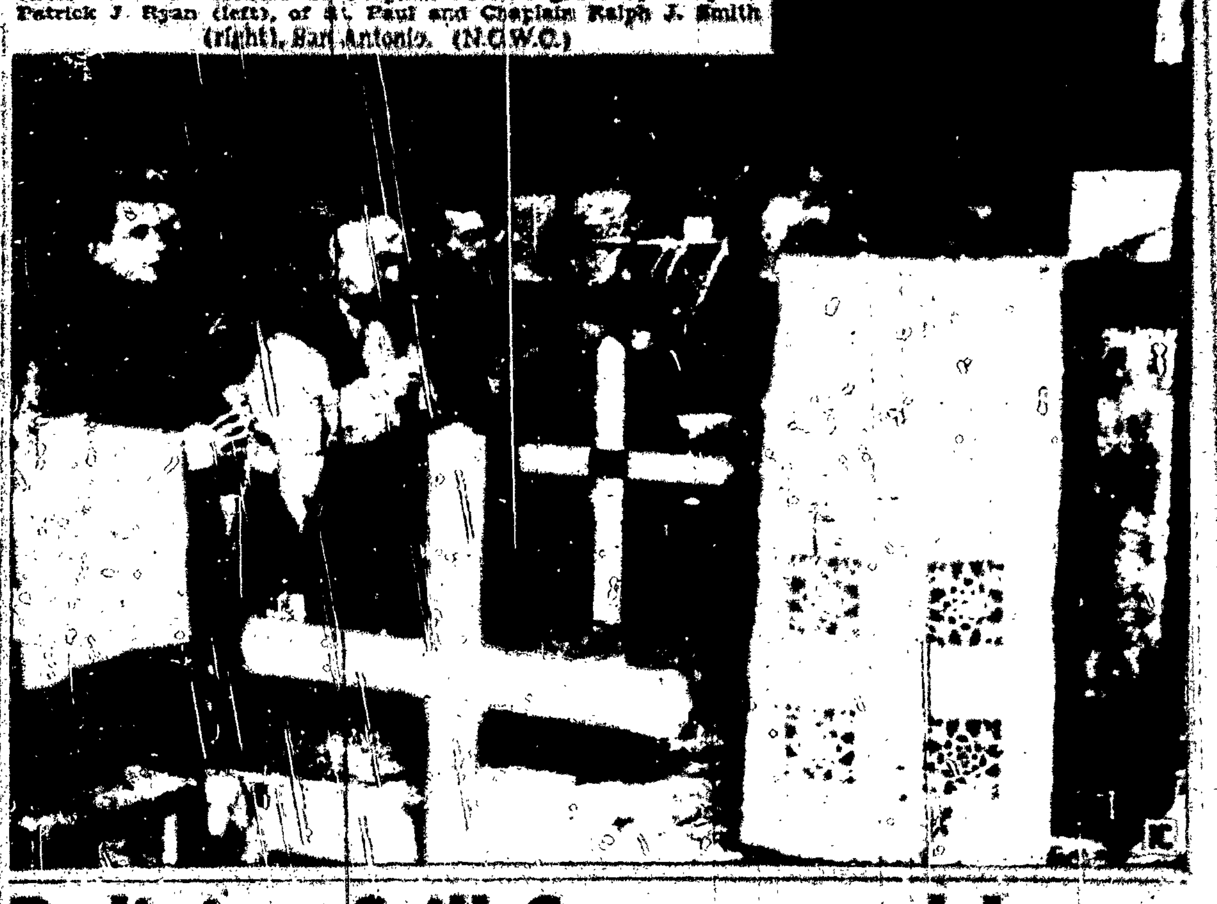
Also on Archbishop Spellman's itinerary is a visit to an American Army hospital "somewhere in Palestine." He will then go by plane to Cairo.

While in the Holy Land the Military Vicar has visited American and allied soldiers and held personal conversations with them.

Through this correspondent of the N.C.W.C. News Service, Archbishop Spellman sent this message home: "I am happy at being in the Holy Land during Holy Week and on Easter and appreciate the unusual privilege of participating in the Holy Hour in the Garden of Gethsemane on Holy Thursday and of celebrating Holy Mass at the Lord's tomb on Easter Sunday during my private pilgrimage here."

AT GRAVE OF HEROIC CHAPLAIN IN AFRICA

At an altar built over the grave of Father Clement Falter, heroic Army chaplain killed in North Africa, Archbishop Francis J. Spellman, of New York, Military Vicar, celebrates a requiem Mass. During his tour of American camps overseas, Archbishop Spellman visited Catholic chaplains and troops and the American Military Cemeteries. He was assisted at Chaplain Falter's grave by Chaplain Patrick J. Ryan (left), of St. Paul and Chaplain Ralph J. Smith (right), San Antonio. (N.C.W.C.)



Religion Still Suppressed In Russia Avers Secular Writer

NEW YORK—(NC)—In a clear cut eyewitness statement of the condition of religion in Russia today, a speaker recently in that land, talking to a nation-wide radio audience, made the following points:

1.—Churches are subjected to continuous and potent pressure through exorbitant taxes; one being cited that is required to pay $19,000 a year for the mere privilege of keeping its doors open.

2.—Churchgoers are discriminated against in their jobs.

3.—No clergy is permitted to be trained to replace those still left in the country.

4.—Since 1917, about 1,500 Catholic churches have been closed in Russia.

5.—While anti-religious propaganda was eased with the start of the war, competent observers regard this as a war-time expedient and believe the Communist regime in Russia is basically just as anti-religious as it ever was.

These statements were made in a broadcast over WEAF of the National Broadcasting Company's system, by Walter Graebner, who was senior correspondent for Time-Life magazines in Russia. He is the author of the recently published book "Round Trip to Russia" issued by Lippincott.

Among other things Mr. Graebner said that the Moscow regime had brought out "for consumption abroad" a fine book seeking to prove that religious freedom exists in the Soviet Union.

(In recent weeks the N.C.W.C. News Service, in an exclusive dispatch [CATHOLIC COURIER, Mar. 4, 1943], described this book and provided authentic refutation of it.)

Mr. Graebner also described the devoted service of an American priest, Father Leopold Braun, A.A. who has charge of one of the three Catholic churches in Moscow.

Icons, Mr. Graebner said, are impossible to obtain in the Russian shops, since their manufacture and sale is prohibited.

On his last Sunday in Russia, he said, he visited the Cathedral at Moscow and found the large building crowded and with more people still arriving. Most of them were elderly or middle-aged women, he said, but there was a surprising number of children and Red Army men.

"At the time of the Revolution there were 454 Greek Orthodox churches open in Moscow," Mr. Graebner said. "By 1934 there were less than 60. Now there are 20.

"These, and the others still open elsewhere in the Soviet Union, are subjected to continuous and potent pressure. Taxes, for example, on land, buildings, fuel and the priests themselves are often exorbitant. I was told that one Moscow church, St. Elias, pays $19,000 a year just for the privilege of keeping its doors open. Churchgoers do not get along as well in their jobs as those who stay away. Since all the monasteries have been closed, no priests have been trained to replace those who die or who have left the country. Soon, therefore, there may be no priests to function even in the few churches that are still open.

"Since 1917, about 1,500 Roman Catholic churches have been closed in Russia. One of the three, still open in Moscow, is administered by an American from Massachusetts, Father Leopold Braun. For his pluck and patience under extreme difficulties Father Braun has become world famous in religious circles."

Heads Sword of Spirit Movement

LONDON. — The Most Rev. Thomas Williams, Archbishop of Birmingham, has become president of the Sword of the Spirit movement, succeeding the late Cardinal Hinsley, its founder.

WRITE TO THOSE IN SERVICE