Father Wheaton Home, Tells Graphic Story Of Sea Rescue

Wearing service colors, including the Asiatic-Pacific campaign ribbon and the silver star, which designates his participation in five sea engagements with the Japs, the Rev. John K. Wheaton, priest of the Rochester Diocese and United States Navy Chaplain, was welcomed home to Rochester this week by his family and friends.

"I came pretty close to going!" was the pithy reference of Father Wheaton to his harrowing and dramatic escape when his ship, the S.S. Helena, was sunk in the Battle of Kula Gulf.

In the vanguard of a light task force stalking a Jap naval force, the Helena, Father Wheaton explained, opened fire at 1 o'clock in the morning and from the short distance of 4,500 yards.

Takes Battle Station

During the battle, Father Wheaton took his battle post, which was the sick-bay below deck, where casualties would be brought. The Helena, which was a light cruiser, successfully sunk two Jap cruisers, one Jap destroyer, and was firing on a third cruiser when she herself was hit by a salvo from an enemy destroyer. Immediately water began to flood the sick-bay, where fortunately there were no patients. Father Wheaton, however, had to swim to the stairway before he could climb on deck.

Following the order to abandon ship, the Rochester priest spent three days in the water before reaching an island in Japanese infested waters. He and his companions were subsequently rescued in a daring sortie by an American cruiser.

'Everyone Prays'

Referring to the long hours that he and his fellow crew members spent in the water, the former Helena chaplain said, "Prayer has a special meaning under these conditions.

"At a time like that, everyone prays and prays hard," he explained. "Even the fellow who never went to church prays—maybe for the first time.

"There were Catholics, Protestants and Jews in the group, and we had all been praying individually for aid. After awhile we joined together in prayer, and as we were asking for relief, a plane flew overhead and dropped us a rubber life raft."

Proud of the fact that the Helena had sunk three Japanese ships before being hit herself, Father Wheaton told that in the Battle of Kula Gulf the American ships were outnumbered 12 to 7 by the Japanese force. "This was the closest that the Helena ever came to an even break," said the rescued chaplain.

Mass on Every Ship

Strongest among Father Wheaton's experiences in the Far Pacific was the thrill that he had when he saw a fleet of American ships arrayed in an island harbor, and all with their church flag flying. "Mass was going on," he explained, "in every ship."

Evidence of the faith of servicemen was evidenced in the account Father Wheaton told of how "a unit of Seabees came ten miles through rain and mud up to their knees in order to hear Mass."

Father Wheaton will report to Sampson Naval Training Station on Oct. 3. At present he is visiting his sister, Mrs. Maurice Styles, 203 Woodbine Ave., Rochester, and his father, Henry K. Wheaton of the same address.

'PADRE INC.' ON SOLOMONS — Lieut. Col. John P. McGuire of Providence, R. I., Catholic chaplain in the Russell Islands, meet beautiful group of the Solomons, sits outside his tent reading his Office.—(NCWC)

Two Jesuits From Here Interned By Japs In Philippines

Two Jesuit Fathers, scientists and educators, who received their early education in Rochester Diocese, are among the 81 Jesuits who have been interned in the Philippines since the Japanese took over the islands more than 18 months ago, the Jesuit Philippine Bureau in New York City announces.

They are:

The Rev. Eugene A. Gisel, S.J.
The Rev. Leo W. Welch, S.J.

Father Gisel is a former St. Boniface parish boy and his mother lives at 334 Linden St., Rochester, and Father Welch was born in Webster where his parents live and where he received his early education in Holy Trinity School. Father Gisel attended the old Rochester Catholic High School and both he and Father Welch studied at St. Andrew's Seminary.

Their names were among those relayed to the Society of Jesus by the State Department upon receipt from Japanese authorities.

Father Gisel, a chemist, taught in The Ateneo, famed Jesuit university, high school and military school founded by the Jesuits in 1859. He had been doing extensive research work in food conservation. The Ateneo's military department, known as "the West Point of the Philippines" was commanded by an aide of General MacArthur. It was a training school for most of the officers of the Philippine Army which helped defend Bataan.

Father Welch on his arrival in Manila became an astronomer and meteorologist and was in charge of the Manila Observatory which served as a weather station for a large Pacific area.

PRAYERS FOR HIS SOUL ASKED BY FATHER DOYLE IN LAST LETTER HOME

The Rev. Neil J. Doyle, first alumnus of St. Bernard's Seminary, Rochester, is in action, died in a station hospital not far from the spot on Munda where he had received his mortal wounds, and his last words were to have the people back home pray for him, according to a letter written by Pvt. Salvatore J. Calvo of Hartford, Conn.

He and Father Doyle had been wounded in the same action, Private Calvo says, and they were brought to the same station hospital and placed side by side. Finally Father Doyle died there of his wounds. "At the very last he expressed his wish that a prayer be offered for the repose of his soul" by those at home.

Seminaries' Alumnus Promoted To Captain

The Rev. Claire E. Snyder, alumnus of St. Andrew's and St. Bernard's Seminaries, Rochester, and senior Catholic chaplain at Lowry Field, Colo., has been raised to the rank of Captain. Father Snyder was commissioned by the Army in November, 1942, and is a priest of the Diocese of Buffalo.

Lauds Holland Clergy For Defy

NEW YORK.—The clergy of Holland, both Catholic and Protestant, were praised by Dr. Alex. [illegible] Loudon, Netherlands Ambassador to the United States, for their championship of resistance to Nazi oppression. A statement by Dr. Loudon was made public here by the Netherlands Information Bureau.

Dr. Loudon said: "The churches being now the beneficiaries of the last years within Germany, realized at once that the ministerial charter of National Socialism would [illegible] authority but its [illegible] not only to [illegible] but also to [illegible] teaching."

Safe After Three-Week Jungle Battle; Again Fr. Heindl Says Mass

Coming through unscathed in a battle engagement in the South Pacific where dense jungles separated his outfit from the Japs by scant yardage, Chaplain Elmer Heindl, priest of the Rochester diocese, declares "the toughest thing for me to take was nineteen days of no Mass."

Describing his twenty-four days of "rugged" existence in jungle fighting in a letter to his parents, Mr. and Mrs. William C. Heindl, 124 Melville St., Father Heindl says he had, and survived, "the toughest kind of combat that is possible to think of." That he has come through safely he attributes to "the prayers that all of you folks have been saying."

Under Sniper Fire

Pushing through jungles so thick that the sun hardly gets through, the U. S. forces were so close to the enemy that a thousand Japs could have been twenty-five or fifty yards, front, side or rear, and would not have been seen nor heard.

"One minute I would be talking to a man, the next a sniper would have him," the Rochester Chaplain writes. "I had plenty of real close calls, as I was close to the front."

His outfit was highly commended by Corps headquarters for aggressive action and the battle was declared a success.

'Rugged' Living

"But the story behind that commendation," he continues. "It seems strange that to preserve the American way of life we have to live just the opposite, eating out of tin cans, heating with captured Jap canned heat and twigs, soluable coffee and C rations—catching rain water in our helmet at night to have a cup of cold coffee or cocoa in the morning—or procuring mud thick water from shell holes as the only water supply for days — highly chlorinated, of course."

Deep in mud, without taking off their clothes in 19 days and, Father Heindl himself, but two shaves in that time, says "We all looked like Abraham Lincoln."

Mass Again Draws

Finding it impossible to take along his Mass kit, the Chaplain had almost three weeks of no Mass or the Sacraments excepting Penance and Extreme Unction (and Baptism). After the heat of the battle he was able to return to where his Mass kit was left and found it in a mildewed state.

Cleaning it up, the linens will never again be white, he celebrated Mass and it was "attended in the jungles like it never was before in the greatest cathedrals."

"What Catholics these lads will be, if they don't forget the lessons learned the hard way."

Father Heindl told of welcoming 225 at General Memorial Services for the fallen. Everyone of the boys, Catholic, Protestant and Jewish (and former atheists) he states, "are begging for a chance to worship, and thank God now! Wonderful are the ways of the Lord!"

Views Bomb Ruins In Rhineland With 'Ice-Cold Horror'

"A walk through the devastated Rhineland cities makes us weep, and all entering a town after a heavy raid are overcome with ice-cold horror," is the report of the Most Rev. Joseph Frings, Archbishop of Cologne, in a pastoral letter issued to his priests and people following the first heavy air raid on his See City at the end of June.

The Archbishop's pastoral states in part:

"God's hand weighs heavy on us," the pastoral says. "A walk through the devastated Rhineland cities makes us weep, and all entering a town after a heavy raid are 'overcome with an ice-cold horror.

"Now it has been Cologne's turn. The old city is in ruins. Practically all the churches of irreplacable cultural value and the incomparable cultural monuments have been destroyed or badly damaged. Not even the Cologne Cathedral has been spared. The Archbishop's residence also has been gutted. A bomb hit my shelter, killed two nuns at my side and wounded five others.

"We all have become poor. We suffer particularly thinking of the innumerable dead torn so suddenly from life. We can only interpret these terrible happenings as God's judgment against the world's sins."

Italians Ask Vatican To Communicate 'Open City' Stand To Allies

VATICAN CITY.—(NC)—The measures and the decision taken by the Italian Government to render Rome an "open city" were communicated to the Holy See for the purpose of transmission to the Allied Governments, it is confirmed by official Vatican circles.

Osservatore Romano, Vatican paper, has published the Stefani Agency report stating:

"The Italian Government has besought the Holy See and the Swiss Government to notify the Governments of London and Washington that it has adopted the following measures and decision:

"The defensive works of the City of Rome have been rendered unusable and orders have been given to anti-aircraft batteries not to fire and to fighter planes not to operate in the skies above Rome.

"The transfer of the German and Italian commands and the removal of their respective troops from the City, in which will remain only the garrison necessary to the maintenance of public order, is being actuated.

"The Rome railway facilities, so far as concerns military transport, are no longer to be used as marshalling yards, neither for loading or unloading, nor as a storage yard for military trains. Thus within the perimeter of Rome, the facilities are reduced to a simple transit line.

"Furthermore, dispositions are being adopted to effect the transfer outside the inhabited limits of military establishments and arms and munitions factories."

Suspend Bigotry Till War Ends, 'Life' and 'Time' Urged By K. of C.

NEW HAVEN, Conn.—A resolution directed to the publishers of the magazines Time and Life and their associated enterprise, the film "March of Time," charging them with a persistent anti-Catholic attitude and suggesting that they modify or suspend this "anti-Catholic policy," at least for the duration of the war in the interests of national unity, was adopted at the 61st annual meeting of the Supreme Council of the Knights of Columbus, it is announced here.

MRS. CHURCHILL, DAUGHTER VISIT QUEBEC CHAPEL; BUY NUNS' NEEDLEWORK

QUEBEC.—While on a sight-seeing tour of Quebec with her daughter, Mary, Mrs. Winston Churchill, wife of Great Britain's Prime Minister, paid a visit to the chapel of the Franciscan Sisters.

Later they visited the nuns' workshop where the finest needlework done by members of the Order, is on sale. Mrs. Churchill spoke to the nuns in French and had details of their work explained to her. She and her daughter were very much impressed by the fine needlework and made a number of purchases.

Mrs. Churchill and her daughter made the visit unheralded. They were not recognized by the nuns, who only became aware of the identity of their visitors after photographers and reporters put in a belated appearance.

Authority On Deaf

San Diego.—Sister M. Geneviere, of the Sisters of St. Joseph, of Corondelet, who has died at Tucson, Ariz., was noted for her work in the education and care of the deaf for more than 25 years in Oakland.