

Cardinal Spellman's Christmas Visit To Korea Battlefront Brings 'Heartlift' To Fighting Yanks On Heartbreak Ridge

By REV. PATRICK O'CONNOR

Seoul—(NC)—Thousands of soldiers in the snow-caped, frost-bitten, front lines of Korea are still treasuring in their memory the visit of His Eminence Francis Cardinal Spellman, Archbishop of New York, who kept his promise to spend Christmas with the troops by making a three-day tour of the lines.

The Cardinal returned to Seoul with Gen. James A. Van Fleet, Eighth Army commander, after celebrating Mass five times for troop congregations estimated to total 7,000. He visited corps headquarters, divisions and an American hospital. He gave 11 talks and spoke individually to thousands of soldiers. Representatives of all other U. N. forces also met him.

HIS EMINENCE traveled by light plane, helicopter, jeep and staff car. A snow storm failed to stop him and he went within range of communist artillery.

Returning here after a close-up view of devastated Korean towns and villages, he brought back with him addresses of thousands of relatives of soldiers and promised each man to whom he spoke he would write to his family.

His Eminence said three Masses on Christmas Day. It was a white Christmas as the snow fell on him and his congregations. When snow made helicopter flying impossible, he traveled the mountain roads in a skidding jeep. At one point the Cardinal and General Van Fleet helped push the jeep back on the track.

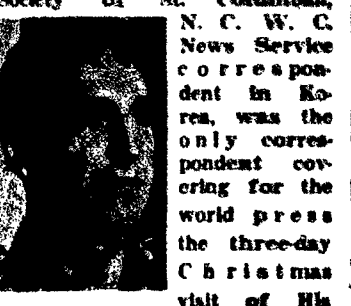
The first Christmas Mass the Cardinal celebrated was the Mid night Mass in the chapel of the First Corps.

MUD-STAINED, unshaven men of the First Marine Division came straight from the front line to attend the mid-morning (second) Mass celebrated by the Cardinal. The largest tent available at division headquarters, tightly packed, could not hold the congregation, estimated at 3,000 men. Part of the tent wall was raised so that men who knelt in the open in the cold snow and under a threatening sky could see the altar. A loudspeaker carried the prayers, hymns and the Cardinal's sermon to the overflow crowd outside.

The Marines down from the front still carried their carbines. The Confession line formed in

Priest Covers Trip For World Press

Washington—(NC)—The Rev. Patrick O'Connor of the Society of St. Columban, N. C. W. C. News Service correspondent in Korea, was the only correspondent covering for the world press the three-day Christmas visit of His Eminence



O'Connor, Eminence Francis Cardinal Spellman, Archbishop of New York, to the United Nations troops at the fighting front.

None of the Cardinal's stopping places across Korea had air strips long enough to accommodate large planes, some of the strips can only take two-seaters. Hence, correspondents covering the flying visits of the Cardinal were limited to four: one each for news stories, photos, news reels and radio.

In such cases, the various news services agree on one man whose dispatches are pooled. Representatives of five major news services here agreed on assigning the place to Father O'Connor. He reported for them and, separately, for N.C.W.C. News Service, whose subscribers are mainly weekly papers.

Because of this arrangement, the N.C.W.C. News Service had the only eye-witness reporter throughout the Cardinal's Christmas visits with the troops. Father O'Connor's spot news dispatches for the daily press were used by Associated Press, United Press, International News Service, Reuters and Agence France Presse.

the open. A man would hand his weapon to his buddy to hold when his turn came to kneel beside a priest.



While 2,000 men of the U. S. Seventh Division kneel in the snow, His Eminence Francis Cardinal Spellman of New York conducts a Christmas Mass in Korea. The services were conducted during a heavy snowstorm, but the cardinal was sheltered by a tent. The altar was decorated with pine boughs. (NC Photos)

DURING THE Mass the entire congregation recited, after the Cardinal, a prayer he had composed.

Many of the men had never seen a Cardinal before this Christmas rendezvous — kept amid Korean mountains while artillery boomed across the ridges.

"This is the first time I have seen a Cardinal in person and was able to talk to him," said Marine Corp. Kevin J. Griffin, of Franklin Lakes, N. J. "It was wonderful of him to come to Korea to be with us for Christmas. The most impressive part of his visit was during Mass when he said: 'I want to bring Holy Communion to each man personally.'"

The Cardinal gave Holy Communion to 450 men, and met Marines individually before and after the Mass.



His Eminence Francis Cardinal Spellman of New York and Military Vicar of the U. S. Armed Forces, conducts a wounded UN soldier at a hospital near Seoul, during the prelate's Christmas visit to the Korean battlefront. News in background was unidentifiable in this photograph. (NC Photos)

Three thousand men formed an open-air congregation. Many came straight down from the mountainside bunkers and foxholes that form the front line. They were rumpled, stained battle dress. They were cold and red-eyed. But they came eagerly to Mass and to meet Cardinal Spellman.

The setting for this Mass, the third offered by Cardinal Spellman on Christmas day, was one of the most impressive that one of this war-shouldered land of jagged skylines and poignant memories can offer. The front line was only 3,000 yards ahead. The dull roar of artillery sounded intermittently. Behind the altar, covered and shielded by tenting, a gaunt gray ridge towered over the improvised Sanctuary. It was Heartbreak Ridge.

Today it became Heartlift Ridge. The Christmas Mass, coming and his words would lift up hearts of men who by late afternoon would be back on the mountain line.

Father (Capt.) Kenny Lynch, O.P., of Chesham, with other Catholic chaplains, had been hearing Confessions before Mass. It was clear that they could not hear all that wanted to come. The Cardinal led the gathering in reciting the Act of Contrition. Then, in a voice that betrayed his emotion, he gave general absolution.

Cardinal Celebrates Mass Aboard USS Wisconsin

Aboard USS Wisconsin in Korean waters, His Eminence Francis Cardinal Spellman, Archbishop of New York, celebrated Christmas Mass for the service men in the ship's mess hall.

His Eminence was accompanied by a large number of military and civilian personnel. The service men were gathered in the mess hall for the Christmas Mass.

The Cardinal, accompanied by Gen. James A. Van Fleet, Eighth Army commander, celebrated Mass for the troops on the ship.

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Korean President Presents Medal

Seoul, Korea—(NC)—President Syngman Rhee personally conferred the "National Medal of the Republic of Korea" on His Eminence Francis Cardinal Spellman "in appreciation of his mission and devotion to the liberation of Korea."

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McCormack Backs Envoy To Vatican

Boston—(NC)—Representative John W. McCormack of Massachusetts, House majority leader, placed here today the removal of diplomatic relations between the United States and the Vatican as a condition of the return of the Holy See to the United States.

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Philippines Given Military Veto

Manila—(NC)—Clear relations between the United States and the Philippines will be maintained, it was announced today by Secretary of State Acheson.

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