

**Own's Welfare
Not Enough**

Detroit — (RNS) — A Catholic expert on racial relations asserted here that it is impossible for a Catholic layman to concern himself with his own spirituality without also concerning himself with the problems of international peace and the treatment of minority groups.

Msgr. William Quinn of Chicago, director of the U. S. Catholic Bishops Committee on Migrant Workers, made this contention in an address at the close of the 9th Quinquennial Congress of the Third Order of St. Francis, a Roman Catholic lay group devoted to translating the ideals of St. Francis of Assisi into social action.

"The requirement of the dignity of the human being, regardless of color or nationality, plus alleviation of physical problems of hunger and housing, are two challenges that must be faced up to by every free man who would practice the teachings of Jesus Christ," Msgr. Quinn said.

marked the end of St. Mary's career as a military hospital. By September, as a statement then published in the press indicated, the Hospital was "nearly relieved of its military inmates." We may assume that by the beginning of 1866 all of the servicemen had been discharged or transferred to other Federal institutions.

Three decades later, the aged "Mother Hieronymo" — as she was by that date popularly known, not officially but out of affection — was questioned by a journalist on her recollection of the war days. She answered rather sadly and compassionately, for the memory of what the poor soldier-invalids had suffered was deeply engraved in her soul. "Surely," she concluded with conviction, "Surely nothing that this government can do for them and their stricken families can ever repay the debt the country owes to these brave men whose sacrifice of life and limb preserved the Union."

This was the spirit which had motivated St. Mary's Hospital during the war years — the spirit of patriotic mercy towards those who were defending the integrity of their country.

For a number of years the liberty pole dedicated on Independence Day, 1865, stood as a reminder to Rochesterians of the wartime service which the Sisters of Charity had rendered on that site to disabled soldiers. But the pole has long since vanished, and today the story of St. Mary's military career is all but forgotten.

Fortunately, this state of affairs is to be remedied. The year 1961 marked the first year of our national Civil War Centennial. It also marked the hundredth year since St. Mary's made the first of its many contributions to military nursing during the course of that war. Appropriately, therefore, the County of Monroe erected before the present St. Mary's Hospital a historical marker commemorating the Hospital's career as a military institution.

May this marker, replacing the liberty pole, serve as a reminder to all who pass of what St. Mary's Hospital did, a century ago, with the kindly cooperation of the citizens of Rochester, to raise the spirits and restore the health of hundreds of "boys in blue."



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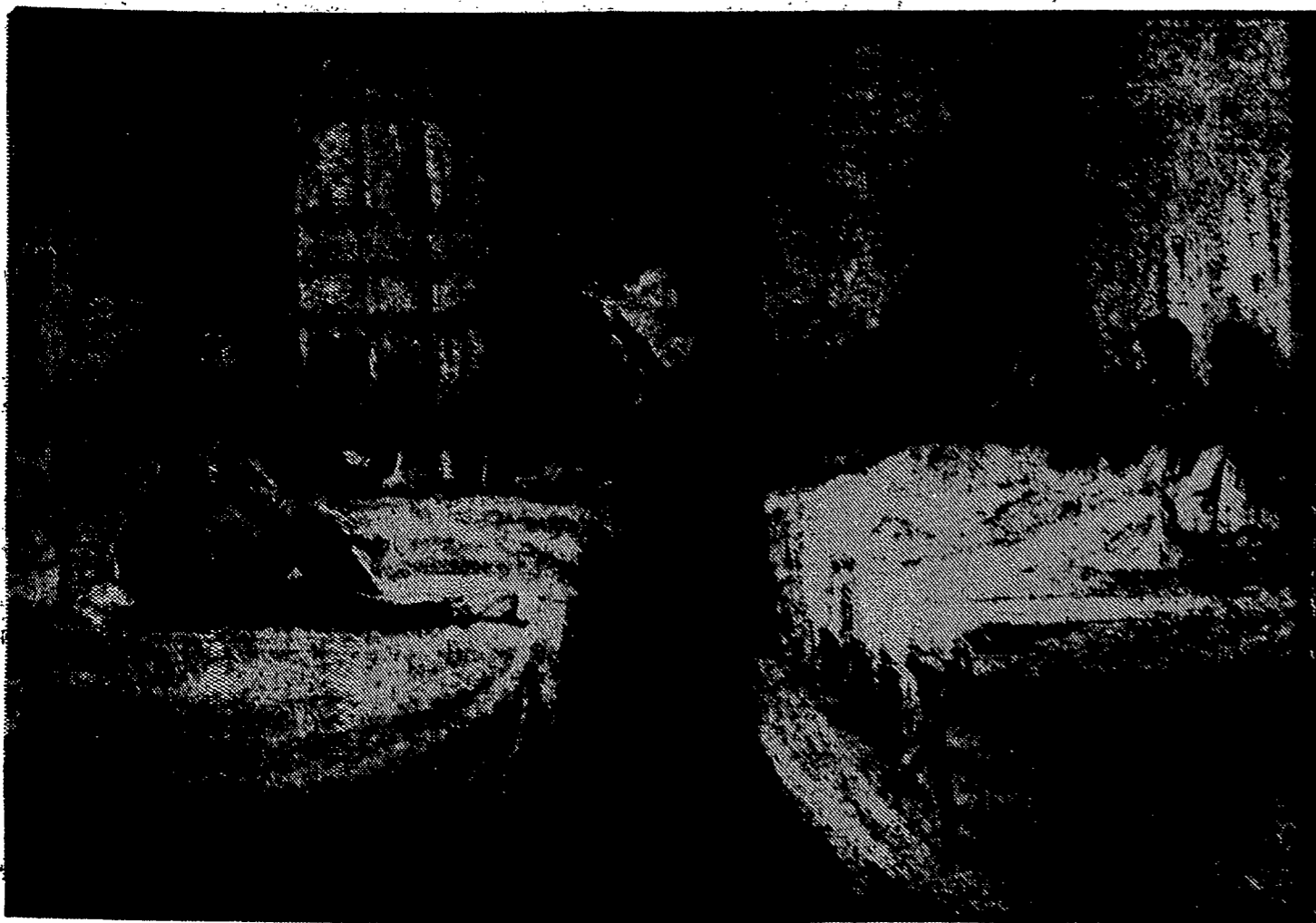
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Nearly three thousand wounded soldiers were nursed at St. Mary's Hospital during Civil War era.

St. Mary's During Civil War Era

(Continued from page 2)

haunted, or throw themselves in the most convenient spot with their heads on their knapsacks. Their wounds would be in terrible condition, and it was pitiful to see them."

By virtue of the government contract, St. Mary's Hospital, from March 1863 until after the close of the war, was an official government hospital. Like any military post, it had its own commandant — apparently always a captain — assisted by a military staff. The commandant granted furloughs and punished misdemeanors. From a medical point of view, too, the hospital was under the surveillance of a U. S. surgeon. Visitors were given passes labelled "U. S. A. General Hospital." Physicians and officers also, as an aged veteran recalled in the 1920's, wore black crape armbands bearing a miniature gold-framed tincture of President Lincoln. (But perhaps this was only after Lincoln's death in 1865, for crape armbands were usually symbols of mourning rather than of authority.)

Discipline

The ailing soldiers seem to have caused the Sisters no personal trouble. One gathers that they were perfectly respectful and grateful. But they did cause their military superiors some difficulty, so as to bring down upon their own heads the penalties of the army regulations.

The Sisters normally went along with the military authorities. One of the servicemen admitted, for instance, was a soldier of the 1st New York Cavalry. He proved to be a more respect for him than the commandant did. A firm feminine hand wrote after his name in the ledger "This man was found to be a malingerer and was ordered arrested as deserter."

In some matters of discipline, the Sisters volunteered effective assistance. Soldiers who returned from leave under the influence of alcohol at times resisted arrest by the officer in charge. The Superior would then approach the culprit and say to him quietly, "Come with me, won't you?" And the culprit invariably became meek as a lamb, and following Sister to the guard house, allowed her to lock him up.

It seems that Sister Hieronymo interfered only once in military discipline and with just cause. On this occasion, when a tipsy serviceman came back from town, the young martinet of a lieutenant in command had him hung up by the thumbs. When Sister Hieronymo learned of this from one of the Sisters, she straightway had him cut down and locked him up in the guard house, pocketing the key herself. Informed in turn of her action, the officer confronted the Superior and demanded the key so that he might hang up the offender again. Sister Hieronymo refused. She told him firmly that the Hospital was a place of refuge, and she would not permit it to become a place of torture.

Thereupon the lieutenant, who had a flair for the dramatic, wrote out a letter of resignation, and left it with the medical inspector, ostensibly to be countersigned, but actually, as he believed would be the case, to be rejected. However, before he took the letter of resignation under advisement, the inspector heard the nun's side of the case. As a result, instead of asking the officer to reconsider, he wrote across the face of the letter, "Accept this resignation. Signed, Azel Backus, Medical Inspector."

Morale

If the nuns at St. Mary's proved to be successful military nurses — and the long chorus of praise from the soldiers bore testimony to their skill — it was because they made an effort not only to heal the ailments

but to bolster the morale of their patients.

A casual visitor on April 3, 1863, found the twenty-four servicemen then under care "cheerful and happy." Some were reading papers and books from a well-stocked table. Other convalescents were engaged in various diversions. Meanwhile, one soldier, "a confirmed disciple of Paganini" was playing away on his fiddle to all who chose to listen. The Sisters wanted to supply their patients with some amusements in order to lighten the trials of pain and forced inactivity. Since they could not afford to provide many of these little "luxuries," themselves they often had to appeal to generous citizens to come to their aid.

A good many responded, non-Catholics as well as Catholics. On April 25, 1863, the Hospital publicly acknowledged the following gifts to the soldiers: Mrs. General John Williams, three bottles of the best liquor, three cans of preserved peaches, five of tomatoes, and six bowls of peaches; Mrs. Isaac Butts, four cans of tomatoes, one jar of peaches, and four bowls of jellies; Mrs. Thomas Rochester, one basket of apples, three pounds of tobacco, and "a quantity of oranges"; Dr. Backus, a box and barrel of useful articles for hospital purposes; Mr. Montgomery, a quantity of miscellaneous reading matter; Mr. C. J. Ryan, a pot of pickles, a jug of wine, a jar of pickled plums, and a bundle of clothing.

Others donated their time. One to whom Sister Hieronymo remained particularly grateful was a Miss Peters who lived on or near Spring Street. "She devoted her whole time to the sick soldiers," Sister later recalled, "reading to them and writing letters for them, and doing everything in her power for their comfort." Another great benefactress was Miss Sarah Cavthra. She not only nursed the soldiers but by her own efforts raised \$17,000.00 for the St. Mary's building fund.

The sudden influx of larger numbers of patients after mid-1864 necessitated an appeal to Rochesterians to help provide furnishings and bedding. A good many then responded to a call, but in the months that followed all too few stepped for-

ward with little luxuries for the invalid soldiers. In December, 1863, one observer stated in the Union and Advertiser that, so far as he could see, nobody in Rochester had thought of giving the soldiers at St. Mary's a turkey dinner on Thanksgiving Day. Seven months later, the local Soldiers' Aid Society was obliged to issue an appeal for volunteer work at both of the hospitals, which seem to have almost run out of bandages and lint for dressings.

Another appeal was published on July 7, 1864. It was cheerful, but it had that pointed wisdom which was characteristic of Sister Hieronymo's notices. In it, Rochester citizens were invited to make donations of food, especially cherries and green peas, to a "holiday feast" which was being planned for the soldier patients. "All convalescents," she reminded her readers with true insight and deep charity, "are very nice in their appetites and very querulous in case they are neglected. We must be always vigilantly careful and charitable towards our sick soldiers, or else they grow petulant, using the double privilege of forgotten heroes and uncared for convalescents."

A brilliant statement of the case, and one which shows how deep went the roots of Sister Hieronymo's philanthropy.

Did the government contract benefit St. Mary's? A hospital struggling towards stability will naturally welcome any added income, and the \$5.50 per week which the Federal authorities paid for each military patient was certainly welcome and certainly helped. But the financial plan sometimes caused almost more embarrassment than it was worth. Rochesterians got the mistaken idea that the hospital was too full of soldiers in 1863 to take care of civilian sick. A public announcement was necessary to correct this impression. Then too, the Federal authorities paid nothing to St. Mary's when the soldiers were on furlough. Many received a month's leave in the fall of 1864 so they could go home to vote in the presidential election. That month the Hospital received very little income. Finally, the government was slow in its payments. When Bishop Timon dropped in to see Sister Hieronymo on October 10, 1864, he found her prepared to set out for Washington

to collect an unpaid bill of \$30,000.00.

Since they had signed the contract not primarily for the recompense involved but out of concern for disabled servicemen from western New York, these financial problems cannot have caused the Sisters excessive anguish. As a matter of fact, the greatest single benefit of the military contract was in the field of public relations. When they saw St. Mary's transformed into a government hospital, many Rochesterians who had previously thought of it as a narrowly religious institution realized that it was a truly philanthropic undertaking which deserved the respect and support of every citizen. At the war's end, St. Mary's still had a debt of \$37,000.00. Thanks to this enlivened public interest, it became, by the end of the decade, a debt-free, well-equipped establishment of which the whole community was justly proud.

Liberty Pole

The American Civil War officially ended when General Lee surrendered his Confederate armies to General Grant at Appomattox on April 9, 1865. Peace had no magic to heal wounds, however, so for some months after the cessation of hostilities, St. Mary's remained a military sanitarium.

Americans celebrated the Fourth of July with special fervor in 1865. The civic observance at Rochester focussed on St. Mary's. The convalescent soldiers still in residence had erected a huge flagstaff or "liberty pole" on the Main Street, Genesee Street corner of the hospital property. Mayor Daniel D. T. Moore, President Martin B. Anderson of the University of Rochester, and other distinguished officers and citizens sat in the places of honor. There were speeches and martial music and all that was typical of the old Independence Day festivities. But the crowning moment of that afternoon's program came when Major A. T. Lee solemnly raised the first flag into the breeze. The Rochester Grays fired a salute as it fluttered into position, and the patriotic throng that had gathered gave a mighty cheer.

For all practical purposes, the dedication of the liberty pole

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