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## State honors Fr. Hayes for World War II valor

By Lee Strong  
Associate editor

PITTSFORD — Father John S. Hayes has a way of putting heroism into perspective — especially when the term is applied to him.

"What I did was what any priest would have done under the circumstances," recalled the 82-year-old former World War II chaplain. "I don't see it as extraordinary.

"Offering Mass in a barn on the hood of a car meant more to me in terms of the priesthood," the priest added during an interview at the St. Joseph's Convent Infirmary, where he currently lives.

Father Hayes' view was not the one that counted, however.

According to a general order issued Dec. 31, 1944, the Rochester priest was awarded the Bronze Star "for heroic service in connection with military operations against an enemy of the United States in France, from 8 November 1944 to 8 December 1944. Chaplain Hayes, voluntarily and with disregard for personal safety, entered an area under enemy shellfire where he gave spiritual comfort to the wounded and frequently assisted in rendering first aid."

Father Hayes had reason to think back on that honor Sept. 22 of this year. He was presented with the New York State Conspicuous Service Cross by State Assemblyman Jerry Johnson, a Republican whose district includes Pittsford, Mendon, Henrietta, Rush and Livingston



Matthew Scott/Staff photographer  
**Father Hayes wears the New York State Conspicuous Service Cross awarded him Sept. 22 for valor during World War II.**

County, and who had sought out people like Father Hayes to honor.

According to a release from Johnson's office, the award is "the state's highest honor given only to veterans who have displayed exemplary valor during their enlistment."

Father Hayes has his own idea about "exemplary valor."

He noted that shortly after the time period for which he was honored, he was talking to a priest in a town near Bastogne, site of fierce fighting during the


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