

# Travel & Pilgrimages

## Priests recall solemn history at Civil War sites

By Mike Latona  
Staff writer

To Father George Norton, Civil War sites carry much greater significance than your average tourist attraction.

"There's something about being on a battlefield. You can get a feeling for what went on," said Father Norton, who serves as Catholic chaplain at Genesee Hospital in Rochester. "It was a war in our own country, between our own people. It really is an overwhelming concept."

Father Norton began visiting Civil War sites in the early 1980s with a close friend, Father Leo Reinhardt, pastor of St. John the Evangelist Church in Clyde and St. Patrick's Church in Savannah. They travel annually to various Civil War venues ranging from Pennsylvania to the Deep South.

Father Reinhardt, also, is sobered by the magnitude of what transpired on the battlefields he has visited.

"We have to learn the futility of war, that it doesn't accomplish anything," Father Reinhardt said. "If you don't learn from history, you're doomed to repeat it."

Father William Holberton, a retired Rochester diocesan priest who now resides in Bethlehem, Pa., has family ties to the Civil War. While visiting Vicksburg, Miss., he stood on the same field where his great-grandfather fought for the North during the 1863 battle in which Gen. Ulysses S. Grant guided his Union forces to a major victory.

Father Holberton, who also served as a U.S. Army combat



Father George Norton's study at Blessed Sacrament Church, Rochester, contains several paintings and two shelves full of Civil War books that serve as reminders of — and inspiration for — his travels.

soldier in Europe during World War II, is intrigued by the nature of Civil War fighting.

"Their tactics were so different from what we used. They had to fight elbow to elbow, shoulder to shoulder — they didn't have any other way to do it. They didn't have automatic weapons," Father Holberton remarked.

Father William Downs, meanwhile, noted that the war was unusual in American history because countrymen fought against each other.

"Men who went to West Point together wound up on both

sides of the battle," said Father Downs, retiring pastor of St. Patrick's Church in Moravia and St. Bernard's Church in Scipio Center.

Father Downs is planning a riverboat cruise this September that will take him to Civil War sites in Tennessee and Georgia. He said he is especially looking forward to visiting Shiloh, Tenn., where 25,000 casualties occurred in an 1862 battle.

"Shiloh brought to consciousness what both sides had gotten themselves into, and that it wasn't going to be a short war," Father Downs said.

Father Downs has visited Civil War sites since the early 1960s, whereas Father Holberton wait-

ed until the late 1980s, close to his retirement, to begin such journeys.

Since then, Father Holberton has traveled to Gettysburg, Pa.; Antietam, Md.; Fredericksburg, Va.; Vicksburg; Manassas, Va.; Shiloh; and Chattanooga, Tenn. In addition, Father Holberton belongs to several Civil War remembrance organizations. He is also writing a book that examines demobilization following the Civil War.

Father Reinhardt noted that interest in Civil War history has been heightened in recent years by such war movies as "Glory" and "Gettysburg," as well as Ken Burns' Public Broadcasting System series on the Civil War.

Father Holberton added that after the movie on Gettysburg aired, attendance at that site "shot up a fantastic percentage."

"There's just an insatiable interest in the Civil War," Father Holberton said.

For first-time travelers, Father Norton strongly suggested that Gettysburg, located in south central Pennsylvania near the Maryland border, be made a top priority. This area, the most commercially developed of all Civil War sites, commemorates the July 1863 battle that marked the last invasion of the North by the South. The three-day skirmish produced more than 50,000 casualties and is well-documented throughout the 25-square-mile site. Visitors may also walk through the Gettysburg National Cemetery and see a memorial containing the words from Abraham Lincoln's historic Gettysburg Address there.

"I always say that going on a Civil War tour without seeing Gettysburg is like going to Rome and skipping the Vatican," Father Norton remarked.

Many other former battlefields, equipped with numerous monuments and artifacts, are parts of national and state parks. Tourists may purchase cassette tapes at local shops at the sites, Father Downs suggested, and learn the history of these sites as they drive along.

Father Reinhardt said that visitors from Northern states aren't likely to encounter ongoing bitterness from Southern residents about the Civil War.

"There's no real big problem. They're trying to build up the tourism," Father Reinhardt said.

"As a rule, I've never had any problem whatsoever. I always felt welcome," Father Downs added.

### Summer Retreats on the Niagara River

**DIRECTED RETREATS**  
June 22-28; July 20-26

**A SUMMER SAMPLER**  
The Center Team  
June 20-21

**CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER:  
A GUIDED RETREAT**  
Fr. John Mergenhagen  
June 22-28

**PRAYING THROUGH CREATION:  
A GUIDED RETREAT**  
Karen Allen, OSF  
June 28-July 2

**EYE OF THE HEART -  
A RETREAT VACATION**  
Fr. John Mergenhagen  
July 7-13

**THE MIND & HEART OF  
JESUS CHRIST -  
A GUIDED RETREAT**  
Joseph Power, OSFS  
July 20-26

**THE SAN DAMIANO CRUCIFIX -  
A CONFERENCE RETREAT**  
Andre Cirino, OFM  
August 24-29

The Center offers a full Conference Service to businesses and organizations.



For further information or reservations, call or write:  
**Stella Niagara Center of Renewal**  
4421 Lower River Road, Stella Niagara, NY 14144  
(716) 754-7376  
Located 10 miles North of Niagara Falls, NY.

### Classic Italy Tour

August 9-21, 1997  
Spiritual Escort -  
Fr. Michael Volino

**Padua, Venice, Pisa,  
Florence, Siena, Assisi,  
and Rome**

\$2299.00 + airport tax

For further information contact:  
Cathy, Paradise Travel

Tel.: (716) 429-6800  
Fax: (716) 429-5322

### Holl's Inn "An Old-Fashioned Summer Family Resort"

- The Family Resort on Fourth Lake
- Open July 1st thru Labor Day
- Swimming, Boating, Golfing nearby
- Rates from \$85-\$120 per day/per person (includes 3 meals daily)
- Weekly and Family Rates, as well
- All rooms with private baths
- **New!** Housekeeping Cottages

Since 1935 • 63rd Season  
Located in  
the Central Adirondacks  
(65 miles north of exit 31, Utica, NY)  
**Preseason: 315-733-2748**  
**Summer: 315-357-2941**  
South Shore Road • PO Box 417  
Inlet, NY 13360

