

Valedictory Address Delivered by
★ Hon. Morgan J. O'Brien at the
Closing Exercises of the New York
Catholic War Fund Campaign
for the Knights of Columbus
Camp *and* Overseas Service

IT is with mingled feelings of gratification and regret that we bring our labors to a close; gratification that we have succeeded in our efforts, and regret that our meetings must be abandoned and the pleasant personal relations which have sprung from our daily meetings must be discontinued for a time.

I do hope that my judgment is true and that I am right in feeling that the satisfaction and pleasure which I have enjoyed in these meetings are shared in equal measure by each one of you and that our separation now will in no way impair the respect and admiration which each one of us entertains for the other, growing out of the respective parts we have played in bringing to a successful conclusion one of the most important patriotic and inspiring efforts put forth by the Catholics of America.

I use this language advisedly because it is

alone descriptive of the sentiments we, as Americans, entertain.

Had we not succeeded, it would have been a national calamity. It might have indicated that our hearts were not in the war, which, we believe, involves the preservation of our religion, our liberties and our country.

In this country, as well as throughout the world, we have Catholics representing every race. In our citizenship, we have Catholics who, by birth or descent, are French or Belgian, German or Austrian, or Italian, or Irish, or Hungarian, or Poles, or Servians, or Bohemians, or Spanish, or African, and thus from every race and clime we have Catholic citizens representing nearly one-fifth of our entire population, or in numbers, twenty millions of Catholic American citizens.

At the beginning of hostilities in 1914 it was natural there should be among this large and diversified citizenship different views taken and preferences shown for the armed forces fighting in Europe.

But in April, 1917, when our Congress had acted and our President had issued his patriotic and stirring appeal to arms, every American was thrilled and the response was nearly unanimous on the part of our People.

There were still some slight rumblings, but

so far as the Catholic citizens of America were concerned, there never was a question as to where they stood, because they stood forth to be counted, furnishing more than forty per cent. of the enlisted fighting men in our Army and Navy and pledging to maintain this quota to the full limit throughout the duration of the War. We could, however, do more.

It was still proper that as an entire body we should be lined up behind our Government, and express in no uncertain terms to the world the attitude of American Catholics in this War.

To effect this purpose the National Catholic War Council was formed, its creators and supporters being the Hierarchy of the Church, consisting of our Cardinals, Archbishops, Bishops, Clergy and Laity.

The one great organization then promoting Catholic work in the Army and Navy was the Knights of Columbus.

They had a commission from the Secretary of War and the Secretary of the Navy and have received the endorsement of our President and the approval of our Hierarchy.

Behind this agency, which, though unofficial, is in reality a governmental agency, the Catholic Church has placed its resources and has appealed to non-Catholics in its behalf for support.



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And how generously and magnificently has the appeal been answered.

Protestant and Jew have vied with each other in friendly rivalry as to which would do the most to render successful a great patriotic movement which will bring so much cheer and comfort to all our boys in the Army and Navy without distinction as to race, color or creed.

And our success has and will do much more; it will serve to obliterate religious prejudice, to unite more closely in bonds of loyalty and good will citizens of every race and creed, and it will furnish to the world the spectacle of 20 millions of free American Catholics who, to the last man and the last dollar, are prepared to sacrifice all in defense of their flag and country and to maintain the priceless liberties which, in this favored and beloved country, we in common with all fellow citizens enjoy.

If this "Drive" had failed, Prussian Militarism would have thought that our beloved country was lukewarm in its support of the war, and the Teuton propaganda would have continued with increasing violence and ingenuity, but now we feel that we have given notice to the world where we stand and where we shall continue to stand until the victory of right against might has been gloriously won.

