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We Can!

We Must!

INTRODUCTION

When one's country is at war no one is a volunteer! You may have the *privilege* of selecting some line of duty but in the final analysis it is a *duty*, something you must perform, something rooted in a command and not in a request.

Someone has wisely suggested that at such a time a man has two jobs,—one to support himself and his family and the other to support his country but the second may easily become a paramount task without any consideration or very little of the man's wishes or wants.

These thoughts rather inspire the proposition that today as far as war activities are concerned Vincentians are no longer volunteers. The Country, the Church and the Society have a right to issue orders to them trebly compelling when all such authorities unite in the same order, as when they say today

“Vincentians! Exercise in favor of the service man, his family and his Chaplain, that charity of which you boast,—that Catholic charity that is more spiritual than material”.

To bring home then to our Brothers a realization of the fact that *there is such a duty*, that *we can perform it*, indeed that *we must perform it*, is the object of the present publication.

We bespeak therefore a careful reading of the following preliminary statements arranged more in their logical importance than in the sequence of happening.

- (1) As the government, anticipating great military inductions, started to build huge camps and industrial units, thus drew from their homes thousands and thousands of men, there was created a situation that should have engaged the attention of Vincentians, — solicitude for *men away from their homes*—for it is to be noted that in addition to visiting the poor in their homes the first Vincentians also made an effort to *protect those who had left their homes*. As to this movement of the government we Vincentians did nothing.
- (2) When the great inductions actually began the question then became an acute and challenging one for the Vincentians. Not only the past but the future was whispering to us, "*Show us your works*".
- (3) The government, to guard against a repetition of the bickerings and jealousies among the social agencies during the last war, fostered the creation of the United Service Organizations (USO) as one single social group to include Catholic, Jewish and other agencies.

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- (4) To have a properly coordinated representation of the Catholics in such group the ecclesiastical authorities in this country organized the *National Catholic Community Service* (NCCS).
 - (5) The NCCS was to include every agency that was ready to put its shoulder to the wheel, national, diocesan or parochial, — the Holy Name Society, the Knights of Columbus, St. Vincent de Paul Society and any other. But this group, the NCCS, did not give to any one agency as against the others, priority of opportunity, superiority over them or exclusiveness of work assumed. All were and are on an equal footing.
 - (6) The ecclesiastical authorities designated Archbishop Spellman as Military Vicar and the president of Notre Dame University, (afterward raised to the episcopacy) Bishop John F. O'Hara as the Military Delegate.
 - (7) Then, having an organization to superintend all Catholic agencies and a national ecclesiastical authority in control and the corporate integrity of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul being duly recognized, the Superior Council sought and held a conference with the chairman of the NCCS and the Military Delegate, Bishop

O'Hara to discuss what part the Society could take in the war picture.

- (8) As a result of that conference a formal letter was addressed by President Gillespie to the Military Delegate outlining what our Society was able to do and what it was willing to do. To that letter the Bishop responded, in part, as follows:

“Your proposal to offer the facilities of the St. Vincent de Paul Society to assist Army and Navy Chaplains in their work has my hearty approval. I am pleased to hear that you have had a favorable response from 20 percent of the Catholics now in service.

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Your proposal to furnish assistance through home Conferences and to organize camp groups is heartily recommended. It is understood that the Conferences will be discreet in any work attempted in camp and that they will bear in mind the reasonable restrictions imposed by Army regulations.”

- (9) Here then, we have our charter and our chart; our authorization to do the work and a plan as to what we should do.

(10) Into this plan as above indicated some circumscriptions immediately entered with the utmost enthusiasm. Others stood off, some suggesting they knew not what to do, others seemingly challenging the hierarchy and the governing body of our organization in the plan suggested, others still pleading they lacked the time and the money and others the opportunity and the personnel to attempt any such work but the plan herein and hereinafter discussed in one form or another as a total plan or as a part of a plan has been tried, has been found feasible and depends only upon the willingness of the Vincentians to do real Vincentian work in keeping with the Vincentian rules, practices and traditions.

We ask your serious attention now to some remarks by Brother James H. Callahan, of Brooklyn in a paper read at our last annual meetings on the subject, "The Armed Services and the Vincentians—Suggestions for Spiritual Action", and following that article we reprint the splendid paper also read at the annual meetings in Kansas City by Rev. Martin J. Nealis on the subject, "The Armed Services and the Chaplain".

THE ARMED FORCES AND THE
VINCENTIANS
*SUGGESTIONS FOR SPIRITUAL
ACTION*

It may be stated conservatively, that the number of Catholic men in service is greater than our proportionate part of the population of the country and that, of the men in service, the number of Catholics who are commissioned officers, is proportionately less. Each of us knows scores of boys in his own neighborhood who are now in some branch of the service. Most of them were fine, upstanding fellows who in civil life lived good moral lives, attended regularly to their religious duties and received the Sacraments frequently. Others for various reasons were careless in the performance of their religious duties and attendance at Mass with reception of the Sacraments by them was infrequent. It should be the purpose of our Society to assist the boys who regularly attended Church and received the Sacraments to continue doing so and to make every effort to lead back to better ways of living the boys who have been careless. The uncertainty of their future is so great that no effort should be spared to make it possible for each of them to be so prepared that the sudden ending of his life may not be a spiritual calamity for him.

Usually our work has started with material assistance to a distressed family and out of our giving this material assistance, have come our opportunities for spiritual work. Our men in service, however, are not in this category. On the spiritual side, however, conditions seem to be different, and it is in that direction from the experience gained from its almost one hundred years of life in the United States, that our Society is best adapted to serve and can serve with the greatest and most satisfying results.

It is to the splendid men, the Chaplains, that our boys, thousands of them away from home for the first time in their lives, turn for help and our Society is peculiarly organized to give the Chaplain assistance so that he may be relieved of matters which can be done for him by laymen and may thus have additional time for those which he alone can do.

This can be accomplished in great part by the formation of Camp Conferences throughout the country in the manner in which the Buffalo Council established one at Fort Niagara. Every fort, Navy Yard or camp has a personnel which is somewhat permanent. Some camps are merely induction points where recruits are equipped and then moved to another camp for training. Even at an induction camp, the Camp Conference can do great work.

At a fort in Maine of fourteen units the Chaplain cannot visit these units once in two weeks. He is organizing a Camp Conference with at least one member at each outpost. These men will report to him of cases needing special attention and he will have many hours of his time released for his work.

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Many Vincentians are in service and many of them have reported to Chaplains with offers of their help. Every Conference should write to its members to do this at once and around these experienced men, a Conference can be formed readily. Out of their meetings will come their work, in fact, more than they can handle. One Committee learned that some boys are apt to have a spiritual let-down after settling into a Military routine and a Vincentian in their barracks can arouse them from their lethargy. Such work requires many qualities, but the need will produce the men, if the organization is started. It is an anomaly that our Society which was started by young men, should now be carried on largely by the efforts of older men. Out of Camp Conferences, hundreds of younger Vincentians will be recruited who will carry on our work, when the war has ended, bringing to it a true spirit of charity which was indeed born of fire.

Officers strive for good moral life among their commands. For this reason alone they will assist the Chaplain in every way possible, because one man can spoil a squad and one squad will disrupt a platoon. Hence, when a Chaplain finds a man who is troubled about home conditions, he endeavors to bring him out of his difficulties.

If the Chaplain will write to the Conference in the man's parish he can secure a complete and confidential account of conditions. In the average Conference it is likely that some member will know the family, but if not, it is an easy matter to get the facts and send them to the Chaplain.

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It is surely not our purpose to trespass upon the lands of the Red Cross, but rather to assist that great organization. This may readily be accomplished because it is obvious that Vincentians can deal with a Catholic family with great understanding and sympathy, a point which was advanced by a Protestant Chaplain in New England.

The distribution of rosaries and prayer books or missals has been a vexatious problem and its solution is imperative.

At a recent induction, there were 111 men of whom 52 were Catholics, yet 92 kits consisting of rosary, medal and prayer book were passed out. Under this

plan, the men who have not been attending to their religious duties are reached. Their names are not on the Church rolls or lists and they are unknown to the Church, yet at the moment of departure, a most solemn one for them, they have an opportunity to equip themselves properly and from the results achieved, they accept it avidly. Vincentians in Camp Conferences can follow up this beginning.

One of our oldest works has been the visiting of hospitals and there will be, sad to say, many such opportunities all over the country.

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Certain objections have been raised about our participating. Some Conferences state that they have no funds. None is needed for the matters suggested here.

Many splendid works are already being carried on, particularly that of letter writing.

It is doubtful that any charitable organization's purpose and work are less understood than ours. While we do give material assistance to families and individuals who are in need, that is done in accordance with the Rule of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

Unfortunately many consider the Society merely as an agency for the distribution of alms and food tickets.

Camp Conferences working through the

Chaplains in proper coordination with Parish Conferences at home, can bring about international recognition and appreciation of our real work by all, Catholics, Protestants and Jews alike. Ours is an endeavor to achieve that charity of which St. Paul wrote which might well be considered our corporate purpose.

A militant body of Vincentians, working zealously within our Armed Forces and spreading that message of St. Paul among their fellow soldiers, can help to break down those racial, religious and class hatreds which now beset us and plant the seeds which, when peace comes, will bear the fruits of true charity in the hearts of their fellows and overcome the hatreds from which our world suffers today and out of which comes the present holocaust.

At all our meetings we pray for the beatification of our founder, Frederic Ozanam. He was a layman who like most of the members of this Society, had to provide for his own family and devoted his extra hours to works of charity. Never since its foundation has this society had such an opportunity for work as it has today. France, where it was founded, is lost temporarily, but in the United States, England, Ireland and Australia, we can still function. Our work will give tremendous impetus to the movement for the beatification of our founder.

THE ARMED SERVICES AND THE CHAPLAIN

Catholic America is sending her sons to war and she will send them until peace with justice shall be established among men. It is not because she loves strife that she is offering her youth on the altar of sacrifice, but because she loves justice and liberty. Her sons are not driven to the conflict but are enlisting in response to a call which comes from a power which is ordained by God. Patriotism is founded in charity, love of God and love of man for the love of God. In gratitude to Him for giving them America as their home, for the preservation of that homeland and its institutions, Catholic America has taken up arms in this war. No sounding of trumpets leads the march of Catholic manhood to the induction centers and to the training camps. The men go quietly, with grim determination, understanding the serious work which they undertake. They appreciate fully the meaning of the phrase "For The Duration". Whether or not they shall return to their America is in the hands of God. They are resolved that their America shall be preserved. Living or dying, their offering of service and of life is a dedication to the fulfillment of that purpose.

What manner of man is the Catholic American in the armed service of our

Country? He is not changed overnight by enrolling himself in the Army or Navy. He is the same son, brother, husband, father, who yesterday lived in our home. His character is unchanged. He has not lost his love for home, for his father and mother, his brothers and sisters, his wife and his children. That love is intensified through separation. He has the same virtues, the same weaknesses which have been his since first we knew him. He goes into the service humbly, accepting the community life of the soldier and sailor as a necessary routine through which he must pass in order to do his share in the winning of the peace. He has a deeper love for home and home folk than he ever dreamed could be, not as a sentimentalist but as a realist. More than we at home ever thought could be, in absence we are dear to his heart.

The Soldier or Sailor goes through the strenuous drill of the training camp. He whom we trained for the arts of peace, whom we had hoped would be our joy and consolation and support in life is now trained in the art of war. He whom we had prepared to occupy an honored place in life is now learning how to deal death in order that we may live. There is no glamor or glory in the training. There is little in it to inspire in men higher ideals of life. It is accepted as necessary, so that it may be the means to a victory

which may restore to man the deferred, but not lost, opportunity to seek the realization of those ideals. There is much in the discipline, in the preparation for inflicting death and for self-preservation, that would debase man, but there is a power which can counteract and counter-attack successfully all the moral, spiritual evil which, if left unopposed, may dehumanize the man in our armed forces.

He leaves home and family and even country in the service of his government, but he does not leave his God, and his God does not desert him. In the Catholic American there are three loyalties, to God, to America and to family, expressed by a Louis of France as "God, France and Marguerite". His loyalty to them never wavers, never wanes. He may be far from country and home, but never from God. Truly, in the service he is nearer to his God and Savior than he was in his life at home. He knows not when he may be called to be judged by divine justice and mercy. He is consecrated a man of sacrifice, Christ-like in life and in death in his willing offering of his life for the welfare of his country and of his fellows. He sanctifies his life in the service by the daily offering of all his thoughts, words and deeds in union with the intentions of the Sacred Heart of the homeloving Jesus, for the salvation of his soul and for the accomplishment of God's will

through the trials of war. He unites himself daily with his Christ on the Mass-altar Calvaries for the redemption of mankind from the evil powers which range through our world, and for the security of man's right to worship Christ the King, triumphant, in the years yet to be. By the influence of word, example and encouragement, he returns other souls from the ways of sin to the ways of right living. He becomes a light-bearing leader to those who are without the fold in guiding them to the unity of Faith. In life he is truly a son of God, a co-heir with his redeemer of the kingdom of peace, founded on justice and mercy. He will be a warrior, but, despite the teachings of those who know not war, he will be not a man of hate, for few are more merciful than the American who fights unto death for his country, none more charitable towards an enemy than the Catholic who serves in the Armed Forces.

With our men go the ministers of God, the dispensers of the mysteries of Christ, leaders and yet comrades of our fighting men. In training camps and stations, with the marching divisions, in the ships that sound the ocean depths, that course the sea, that fly near the Heavens, in the bleak lands of the north, through the jungles of the Pacific Islands, over the sands of the tropics, in the prison-camps

of the Philippines and Japan, in defeat or in victory, in humiliating suffering or in glorious triumph, their Chaplain-Priests are with our men, living the life, enduring hardship with them, sharing danger with them, sending them to the throne of mercy, dying with them and for them. Pearl Harbor, the Coral Sea and the Heavens themselves can tell how Priests have died for our America. The Chaplains are at their Posts because they are other Christs. They teach their men, our men, to live the Catholic, sacramental life in camp. They, with the assistance of our Catholic Soldiers and Sailors, preserve, protect and defend the faith. Their good example gives courage to those who must endure all because they themselves endure together with their men. Only God knows the spiritual good which has come from the close association of Priest-Chaplains with Catholic men since the war came to America. The souls who have returned to the service of their Lord, the spread of Eucharistic devotion, the many personal sacrifices made by men with an over-full schedule of duties to attend Holy Mass, the eager and grateful response to the recently granted privilege of afternoon and evening Mass, the sanctification of the union of souls whose abiding confidence that God will grant that their love for each other may be eternal, these have resulted from association and spiritual

comradeship of our Chaplains and our men, a relationship closer than can exist in parish life.

Willingly have our Priests offered themselves for the service of the servants of America. If our Catholic Soldier and Sailor veterans are to be the hope of our Nation, our Chaplains will lead them as defenders of the Church and of the freedom to worship God in America in days to come. For them, and for the millions of Catholic Americans, who are and who are to be the crusaders in this war for righteousness, may you Vincentians do all that you can, to encourage them, to aid them in solving problems of adjustments made necessary by separation from their families, to furnish them with the means of advancing in grace before God.

Above all, remember them in your prayers, that they may fight manfully, that they, with God's help and under the angel guardianship of the Michael whose feast is celebrated today, may live to share in the blessings of victory and peace which must come to a people whose help is in the name of the Lord and whose eternal trust is in God.



CONCLUSION

Now we have heard what the *Council* can do and we have heard what the *Chaplain* needs. Let us turn our thoughts now to what the *Conference* can do.

1st—*Conferences* may make up such a program as is most suitable to their own local set-up but that program should be substantial and not superficial. It must be planned to secure real results and not just to avoid a better program because perhaps it is a more onerous one.

2nd—*Members* of a Conference who because of parochial conditions are not able to carry out a definite substantial Vincentian program should join the Special Works Committee of their Council having charge of war activities and give to the Council the energy they are not permitted to give to the Conference.

3rd—Of course each Conference must have one representative on the Particular Council War Committee which shall see to it that whatever Camps or service hospitals are within the circumscription are properly attended to.

4th—The following Conference program is prepared to meet the tenor of our membership, increase the tempo of Vincentian activity while avoiding du-

plication of work and conflict with other agencies but offering full opportunity for the Vincentians to create some record that will be of historical value to the Society and of spiritual value to themselves.

(a) Conferences and members remembering that by their rules in their charity they are non-sectarian and therefore whenever they can with discretion they should help their neighbor. The members should keep this thought in mind particularly in this present program.

(b) Each Conference should secure a list of all the service men in their parish *not only Catholics but all others*. This should not be difficult; it is no state secret who our soldiers are, nor is it a great privilege for anyone to give you the names of those who are fighting for us.

(c) With such *assistants* as the Conference members can obtain they should conduct a house-to-house canvass finding out what homes are willing to take a special interest in one or more service men whose names and addresses will be supplied. These names should be discreetly assembled so that the soldier will receive letters from those with the same common background as he himself occupies.

(d) Such families will write letters to the service men they have thus adopted. They will send newspapers to them and if financially so fixed they might make such gifts as they desire being under no obligation however to do so and they might render any other assistance to the service men whom they have so adopted as fully as they would if they actually knew the young man before he went away.

(e) The Conference itself must be ready to be of any service to the family in demonstration of the idea so little known even among Vincentians that *we are not a relief organization*. We are a society for charity with the *Catholic idea of Charity*—love for our neighbor embodying social and spiritual solicitude as well as, if not more than, the material assistance. This thought should be repeated time and time again because the Vincentian himself should get out of his system the fact that he belongs to a charitable organization with charity defined simply as material relief.

(f) Periodically a great parochial or neighborhood meeting should be held bringing all the families and workers together and appropriate addresses by carefully selected speakers should be given.

(g) Every six months each Conference should file with the Particular Council a written report of what it has done with an outline of what it proposes to do.

(h) The Particular Council should issue a certificate showing that a Conference has pledged itself to work as a Vincentian unit.

(i) The Conference should hold an executive session with the Pastor and Spiritual Director and discuss with them—

- 1—An appeal to the men of the parish to become active members, honorary members or benefactors of the Society.
- 2—A reorganization of the Conference *if necessary* to meet the large and exacting task being assumed.
- 3—Cooperating with the Spiritual authorities in a definite and sustained spiritual program insofar as the whole subject is concerned.

The foregoing program is prepared for any Conference or for any members *really desirous* of cooperating to follow a definite plan.

The time will soon come when substantially all the soldiers that are to be inducted shall have been inducted. The “hip-hip-hurrah” of groups going to the

trains will soon pass away. The country as a nation and the people of it will soon get down to the humdrum of hard, grim effective work. Uniforms will be stripped from those whose only interest in military affairs was the wearing of them. People who for publicity purposes are now enthusiastic about war activities and whose names and whose organizations appear prominently in the press will gradually pass out of the picture.

All reasonable thinking men now know that the status of our country in relation to the world has forever changed, they see that the god of war with his needles, the airplanes, has joined the new world to the old fashioning a fabric upon which his spawn may sport and breed the hate, the havoc and the horrors he loves so much and what that god hath joined together no man will ever separate.

Never again can America be isolated, never again can there be freedom from a great military set-up. For the next hundred years it must arm not only to protect itself but to see from an international police standpoint that other nations will be restrained if possible from plunging the world again into such hideous conditions as now exist.

All this indicates a long, definite and assured task for the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. Military camps will be-

come permanent aspects of our national life and the "young men away from home" will again assume the position of one of the major problems of our Society. What we are doing for them in peace and war will be one thought in the querulous minds of those who from time to time will ask us to give an account of our stewardship of Christian Charity.

What will our answer be to the coming challenge—"show us your works?" Vincentians! bring to a close this the first century of our existence in America with a blaze of charitable achievement not the least of which shall be the giving of full measure of your time, your money, your thoughts and your prayers for our servicemen, those blood donors for religious and political freedom.

Vincentians of America! — we have shown what you can — what you may — *what you must* — arise! and shout your promise to the world — WE WILL!

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul
of the

United States of America
in and for the circumscription
issuing this certificate

Hereby Certifies
The Conference of

.....
has pledged itself to work as a unit of
this Circumscription and in conjunction
with it according to the rules, history
and traditions of our Society

for the

spiritual, social and material help of those
now and hereafter in the military and
naval service of our country and of their
homes and their families

In Witness Whereof

we have signed this

Certificate*

as officers of such Circumscription the
.....day of..... in
the Year of our Lord nineteen hundred
and forty.....

.....Council
by

.....President

Attest

.....Secretary

*This certificate to be issued on ledger paper 8x10

We Will!