

## WITH CHRIST-LIKE SOLDIERS ON FUTURE FRONTS

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Fox Hole 487  
During 1943

Hello Brother soldier:

How are you? To refer to you as brother soldier seems more natural every day, especially these days. Perhaps it is because I am thoroughly convinced that "your front" will fight the decisive battles in this gruesome and godless mess. But I think you need plenty of reserves; there doesn't seem to be enough "fire power" yet. . . .

Personally, I no longer attribute this blood spilling to the Japs or Nazis or any one element. It's the everyday guy we rub elbows with in everyday life. Inconsequential, petty, selfish, nasty individuals as such are impotent; but when such individuals become the rule rather than the exception, then we really have worldwide discord. . . .

Tell all the Soldiers in Christ with you to be unrelenting in their prayers. It's the only thing that will end it all. For myself, I am stronger and firmer than ever in my Faith and shall never cease to be thankful for it.\*

Your brother soldier—in the army  
of Uncle Sam,

Don.

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Washington  
Spring 1944.

Dear Don:

Greetings, brother soldier—of Uncle Sam. Many thanks for your letter. Need I add that it brought many happy memories? You will be surprised to hear of one pleasant thought which came bouncing out of the blue. The serious note you struck in the very beginning provoked the recollection of nothing other than visions of Prof. Tangney's Latin class. You must remember his famous bull

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\* Except from minor changes, the excerpts quoted were received from a full-fledged G.I. in the army of Uncle Sam.

sessions, and above all, Prof's favorite side-track—*De Civitate Dei*, and, for that matter, all of St. Augustine. Remember?

Well, the combination of your sombre reflections and an imaginative flashback led me to a search for some recent jottings taken from the *City of God*. The result is the following quotation which I gladly pass on to you for your meditation.

"Two loves," says St. Augustine, "have built two cities: the love of self carried unto the contempt of God has built the city of this earth; the love of God carried unto the contempt of self has built the heavenly city."

The master has, I believe, expressed (as only a saint could) the potent import of your rather startling expression: "your front," namely, the religious front, "will fight the decisive battles" of the war. I say "startling" because it carves out in words the nebulous things, and rumors of things to come, which have been suggested in classes and lectures and conversations these past five years or more. That there will be battles—and these on the home front—can be brushed off only by the mental lightweights. That the battles will be "decisive" is the unanimous judgment of the "heavies." And as for the religious front—well, without its leadership there just won't be any battles.

No doubt you are wondering where all this apparent double-talk is leading. How is all this going to fill your mental knapsack with supplies for the coming battle on the "religious front?" To answer you, both of us will have to assume that long-range view so characteristic of quartermasters before a big "push." We, too, must know the need and how it is supplied; we must know our terms and how they are applied. Before we march, then, let us have a quick "dress up" of our major term. "Religious front," understood in the rich expressiveness of St. Augustine's thought, should embrace both laity and clergy alike. It should include all those souls who profess allegiance to and observe without compromise the Truths and Rules of Faith revealed by their Redeemer, Jesus Christ. These are the souls who are striving to be perfect, who are "value conscious." Because they are so, they accept the world at its true worth: a service station—a necessary but very, very advantageous stopover—on the direct road to eternity and the Kingdom of God.

With this hasty "dress," or with this new understanding of "religious front" tucked in the bottom of our knapsacks, we can shoulder arms and march—a short distance anyway. Our first step is this: the souls who will fill-in the ranks of our future front should

present—what are we talking about, they must present—a united front. They must form an alliance of love *for* God. They must likewise form an alliance of wrath *against* all persons, places and things that would rob souls of their eternal inheritance purchased by the Blood of the Son of God. Such unity, however, can come only with the full-flowering, the full-living of the Christian life.

Before you reach for your Christian “dog tag” and start your bombardment with accounts of your Christian activities over the years, we must immediately confess to a bit of knavery. There is a catch, and it is this: the unity, which alone can wage successfully the future battles on the home fronts, will flow naturally from the Christian life only when that life is lived as the Master has decreed and as His Spouse, the Catholic Church, interprets those decrees. That is a pretty big mouthful both to read and to swallow; but there is more.

First we need a change of step in our march. Here it is. The “Order of the Day,” every day, for the Christian life is Charity, love of God and love of our neighbor, the two great Commandments of the Christian Law. And the gauge, yes, one of the very first requisites for love is that much misunderstood term “sacrifice.” If you will recall, our Blessed Lord Himself has decreed this very condition. “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.”

We can now step-up our marching pace to “double time.” Sacrifice, then, or the denial of self is the distinctive feature of the Christian life. Our Faith and our Hope and our Charity seek an outlet; they seek to manifest themselves openly. Sacrifice is the outlet; self-denial is the open manifestation. Yet what poverty of meaning this ideal suffers if our self-denial is motivated by no higher motive than its own dress parade. Here we encounter one of the apparent paradoxes so often associated with Christianity. As Christians, we say that the aim of our earthly life is to subject ourselves, to become “G.I’s.” and that only for one purpose: in order to be free. To the godless such an aim seems to be taking a “beach head” in the Sahara. But to us, there is no more crucial objective on which to focus our sights. To become a “G.I.” of Almighty God demands that we enter His “selective service,” a service which has no “contract” with the things of earth. The more successfully we do so, the freer we become. The more detached we are, the freer we are to think, to live and to love in terms of eternal values. God, then, must be the reason for our sacrifice; for, as we are told in the Acts of the Apostles, “in Him we live and move and have our being. . . .”

Without Him, our self-denial becomes a mumble-jumble of emotional complexities, a vague and meaningless effort to satisfy something, we know not what.

If we could only remember that as humans we are peculiar in many respects! In one particular, however, we get the good behavior ribbon: we do not start something with the intention of leaving it unfinished. In other words, just as you do not wander out of your fox hole unless you have an objective in mind, so it is with all of us when we are "on the beam" of manly action: there must be an end towards which our actions point. An act of sacrifice is no exception. When a mother sees her boy marching off in the khaki or blue of Uncle Sam her sacrifice is labelled patriotism, her ruling thought the nation's honor. But if patriotism is the limit and goal of her self-denial it will bring her cold and cheerless comfort should she one day finger a telegram of dread. If, however, she were to see in death the manifestation of a Divine Will and were to believe that her boy's death contributed to the honor and glory of an Almighty God, she would be bound to feel that her sacrifice and his were not in vain.

Present sacrifices and those to be demanded in the post-war reconstruction will be in vain if their unwilling victims are chained to earth and the things of earth. Self-denial will surely be exacted of all. But many will seek to choke down the love which seeks an outlet to God, their true goal, by placing before themselves false gods of merely human motives and human attachment. They will moan and groan in a world of their own making. Your own words summarize very neatly the unhappy result: "Inconsequential, petty, selfish, nasty individuals, as such, are impotent; but when such individuals become the rule rather than the exception, then we really have worldwide discord. . . ."

On the other hand, we as Christians are willing to deny ourselves, we are able to shake off and rise above our earthly shackles only because we refuse to dwell permanently in a world of our own making. Rather, we have before our eyes a realistic picture of a Man of Sorrows. We cannot afford to turn aside from Him even for a moment for He has revealed to us the way to another world; He Himself has given us the Christian Way, His Way. To avoid becoming "petty" and "selfish" and "nasty," we have accepted the invitation of Jesus Christ: "Come to me all you that labor, and are burdened, and I will refresh you." He Who was "meek and humble of heart," He Who was "obedient" and Who "subjected" Himself to men, He is the Model for all who would follow Him. That He



should be so is in accord with another peculiarity we have as humans: we must be shown.

Because we are weak, we look for the inspiration of a leader, an alert Field General who will give us strength. Because our Christian way of life is geared precisely to meet our needs, we have such a Leader in "the great highpriest" Jesus Christ. His title is significant, for sacrifice was the keynote of His life. It remains the guiding principle for all who would imitate that Life. "He humbled Himself," says St. Paul, "becoming obedient to death, even to death on a cross." In those words we have a most beautiful description of the "campaign" achievements of our Leader. We have, too, a precise summary of the Christian way of life and, with God's help, the future American way of life. For every soul who would follow in the footsteps of the Master there must first be undergone the humbling process of contempt for self. Obedience, the acknowledgement of God's merciful Rule, is next, followed closely by the death to self whereby we confess our complete dependence on God. He Who was the "Lamb of God" has shown us how to become willing lambs for God. "Christ also has suffered for you leaving you an example that you may follow in his steps." Such is the recorded testimony of the first commander-in-chief of the Church Militant, St. Peter. He Who has "endured the shame" has merited to become the Leader, the very Head of all men. He was in the front lines Himself, you know. And just as His sacrifice is now our joy so our sacrifices are His joy. What greater reward could we seek than a citation as a hero of Christ?

Let us call a halt and bivouac for a while, so that we can inspect the paraphernalia added to our knapsack during the march. At the very least, our report to headquarters can read like this: A united Christian front which will fight the decisive battles on the home fronts of the future must be prepared for tremendous sacrifices, for heroic self-denial consecrated to the love, honor and glory of Almighty God. Or, if the paper shortage has hit you too, take the words of St. Augustine: "the love of God carried unto the contempt of self." But above all do not forget to add: such a love "has built the heavenly city." Such a love, and such a love alone, will build and make possible the united Christian front of the future. Such a love will alone inspire the Christian solutions for the exacting problems of the fast approaching zero hour.

Before retiring, let us avoid all possible misconceptions of this Christian we are grooming so minutely for battle. If we send our report as it is, it might seem to be a fantastic standard designed for

citizens of a dream world, certainly not for men of earth. But when we combine a full appreciation of that Leader Whom our Christian seeks to serve, with an accurate conception of the Christian himself then our report becomes rich and promising—even to the “shave-tails” at headquarters.

The Christian we have in mind is no “Buster-Brown collar” boy, no “ninety-day wonder”; he is not a . . . but wait, let a man who has plumbed well the Gospel presentation of a real Christian expose his findings. The words from Iginio Giordani’s *The Social Message of Jesus* are encouraging; at the very least, they are challenging. Our Christian, says Giordani—

“is not a weakling. Quite the contrary. He is meek, pious, resigned, long-suffering, but he is strong because of all these things; because he has eradicated from his mind all preoccupations for this life and all fear of men (Lk. 12); because he has embraced the cross and fears no further sacrifice. Hence he stands dauntless before men and nature.”

A Christian such as this, united with his brothers under the Cross, must inevitably push on to victory. A society of men so inspired most certainly cannot taste defeat in this life; and, persevering in God’s grace, such men will merit the laurels of eternal victory.

Souls who think in terms of eternity are the kind we want for fighting these future home front battles. Only the Christian life offers an opportunity to think and to live in such terms. The Christian life is a life of love; and a life of love, we know only too well, is a life of sacrifice. So, what we have really meant to say all along is that we are looking for souls who are unafraid to deny themselves, because those who know how to sacrifice know also how to love. And those who know the secrets of Christian love, such souls know how to live.

St. Catherine of Siena, the Seraphic Mother of all Dominicans, provides us with a most vivid motto and aim for our daily lives as militant soldiers of Jesus Christ. In few but thrilling words she summarizes our relations with God—and, incidentally, briefs our report to telegraphic dimensions.

“He is Who is whilst we are those who are not, and we are in need of everything.”

Your Brother soldier—in the army  
of St. Dominic,  
Aloysius McTigue, O.P.

P.S. By the way, Don, June is the month dedicated to honoring

Jesus Christ the Priest. We can all learn from Him the art of sacrificing. Pray then to Him not only for yourself but for all Christians who must follow Him for "we are in need of everything." Remember in a special way our newly-ordained "reserves" on the home front who will go out to fight for God's front and will try to win the American way to His way. Pray that He will supply the necessary "fire power," as you call it, to all His future reserves; that fired by the power of the Spirit they may wield faithfully the Sword of the Spirit.