

451ST BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H)  
RELIGIOUS HISTORY

Generally speaking changes along any line affect the religious status in any army installations. This is very true particularly in a bomb group. These groups have no regular program from one day to another. Days pass by so that Sunday blends into the general picture and is ignored. A bell is really desired to proclaim to all about that the day is Sunday.

My arrival to the Group was at FAAF, Geneva, Nebraska on Sept. 3, 1943. A free hand was accorded me but we followed the program already set up by the Base Chaplain. We alternated Sunday worship and vesper, and it did not take long before the men were settled and could find their way to church. A fine chapel was at the base and an equally fine Catholic Priest officiated.

Moving orders came when things were pretty well set for the winter. Being on the ground echelon we left on Thanksgiving and held small religious group meeting on the train. By this time I was rather well known and many were families and friendly to calling me "Chappie", etc.

At the P.O.E. a mass for the Catholics and vesper for the Protestants was held. Church chimes were an added reminder to all to worship before the sea voyage and its perils had begun.

On shipboard religious and secular song fests were conducted to hold up morale since there was a great lack of anything to do on a Liberty ship. Weekly services were held for all faiths with officers and enlisted men partly officiating in the absence of chaplains of other faiths. Christmas Eve and Christmas morning services were held with maximum attendance on the open deck and in the hold after dark.

On landing at Naples a civilian Priest was enlisted to give mass to the Catholic men, while the Protestants had services. Most of this was out-of-doors in the cold, blustery winter.

WILLIAM MCNEIL, Chaplain  
Capt., C.C.C.

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