

# FROM THE HOUSETOPS



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## THE CATHOLIC CHAPLAINS

MOST REV. RICHARD J. CUSHING, D.D.,  
Archbishop of Boston

WE have survived the most terrible of all wars. Wherever our soldiers trained, wherever they fought, there stood beside them as the exponent of the noblest things in life, as a comfort in their sorrows, an inspiration in their bewilderment, as a loyal intercessor with their God — their Chaplains. Some of them, like thousands of their comrades, did not return. May I pay them a tribute and review the lesson they bequeathed to us?

Their death suggests to me a biblical text. "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you." *Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends.*

It is easy to talk about charity. No subject so inspires the mind or so lends eloquence to the tongue. But it is very difficult for human nature to *die* for charity, and even more difficult, I sometimes fear, for men to *live* in accordance with it. Our Catholic Chaplains did both. They lived in obedience to the law of love; they died martyrs to charity, witnesses to this supreme personal perfection and social bond. Even though dead, they still speak to us, and as they speak they have every right to demand that we live in accordance with the charity, the greater love, in obedience to which they were willing to *die*.

We may consider briefly the fundamental *social* necessity of that personal charity in the exercise of which our Chaplains died. Perhaps the best analysis of the social characteristics of charity is that which was made by Saint Paul. He would have been the perfect Chaplain. His spirit was that of a soldier; he used military terms when he was attempting to describe vividly and cogently the perfect life of the spirit. He tried, as every chaplain must, to be, as he said, *all things to all people*; he prided himself on being at once a Jew of the Jews, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, and yet the Apostle to the Gentiles. The things which befell him bear a startling resemblance to the stories which veteran Chaplains tell of their adventures overseas.