



Father Edmund B. McLaughlin, Army chaplain, conducting rehearsal of Japanese girl choir which sang the Mass on Christmas Eve for Catholic soldiers of the 24th Infantry Division on Shikoku, Japan. The young girls learned the Mass in Latin in 10 days after a Spanish Dominican nun transposed the Latin into Japanese phonetic symbols. For the first time since the occupation began, Americans and Japanese on Shikoku Island attended church services together.

GIs, Japanese Nuns Kneel With Children At Communion At Midnight Mass, Skikoku

By Sergeant J. Cecil Murray

Sergeant Murray of Baltimore was a member of the Public Relations Office Headquarters of the Twenty-fourth Division, Matsuyama, Shikoku. Sergeant Murray at the time he wrote the following story was waiting daily for his release from the service. He should be home any day now.

Shikoku, Japan, Dec. 26, 1945—The real meaning of universal Catholicity was brought home to Catholic soldiers of the 24th Infantry stationed in Matsuyama, Shikoku, on Christmas Eve, when they knelt side by side with Japanese Catholics at Midnight Mass and heard the High Mass sung by a children's choir.

Spanish-born Father Modesto Perez, 27 years a priest in Japan, was proud of his girls and admitted that he was deeply touched by the "most beautiful sight I have seen for many years."

Through the efforts of Father Edmund B. McLaughlin, O. S. B., division chaplain from St. Benedict's, Oregon, who conceived the idea, students of Matsuyama's Catholic girls' school mastered the entire Mass in Latin in ten days.

The Mother Superior of the school, a native of Spain and a Dominican nun, worked tirelessly to transpose the Latin pronunciation into Japanese phonetic symbols. The chaplain had copies mimeographed for the 30 young girls who made up the choir. Though only averaging about 12 years of age, the little Japanese girls proved to be apt pupils. Their renditions on Christmas Eve night will long be remembered by the Catholic men who spent this Christmas in the Orient.

The inherent American spirit of tolerance and forgiveness was prominent as uniformed occupation soldiers knelt at the Communion rail alongside white-habited Japanese nuns; women dressed in the traditional Oriental kimonos and obis; aged men, their heads bowed humbly; and tiny black-haired children, their wooden clogs clacking against the concrete floor of the auditorium which was used for a chapel.

Before Mass, the children sang Christmas carols in Japanese.