

May 25 2020-Monday, Seventh Week of Easter

Fr. Emil Kapaun

In 1953, shortly after the Communists released prisoners of war from the Korean War, stories began to circulate about a courageous Catholic chaplain

The prisoners told of how the priests had risked his life rescuing wounded soldiers, saving men from the Death March, and caring for his fellow prisoners.

The army chaplain was Fr. Emil Kapaun from Wichita, Kansas. He had entered the U.S. Army Chaplain Corps in 1944 and served in India and Burma. After World War II, he returned to the United States for graduate work, but rejoined the chaplain service in 1948. In July 1950, Fr. Kapaun was assigned to the army's Eighth Cavalry regiment in North Korea.

When the Chinese Communists attacked and overran the regiment on November 1, 1950, Fr. Kapaun stayed on the battlefield, ministering to the dead and dying, caring for the wounded, baptizing, and hearing confessions.

Fr. Kapaun was captured the next day. As a POW, he risked his own death by preventing executions of wounded Americans too injured to walk. He nursed the sick and dying. American soldiers claim the North Korean prison camp guards deliberately starved the priest in order to stop the religious services he conducted in defiance of camp rules.

The 35-year-old priest died of pneumonia in a POW camp on May 23, 1951.

In 2008, the cause for Fr. Kapaun's canonization was formally opened.

Today is Memorial Day

The eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had ordered them. (Matthew 28:16))

The setting for the Gospel passages this week is on a mountain.

Jesus has been up and down a few mountains in Matthew's Gospel (Matthew likes mountains). There was the great Sermon on the Mount, then the mountainside where he fed the multitude, and the mountain where Jesus was transfigured.

But the mountain that I should keep in mind in order to appreciate this final scene in Matthew's Gospel is the mountain where Satan took Jesus at the very beginning of his public ministry. Jesus could have had all the kingdoms of the world for what seemed to be a cheap price: One bow to Satan.

Of course, that was a scam.

Now, here at the end, on another mountain, all power and glory will be given to Jesus.

The price was high—it was crucifixion and death.

But it was worth it. A whole new age has begun and it is our age. This is the part of the Gospel that steps into our time. What Jesus is going to say to the 11 disciples in this Gospel is a message that is also addressed to me today.

Am I ready to listen?

Spend some quiet time with the Lord