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Article Summary: Chaplain Oscar H Reinboth of Seward broadcast 1944 Easter Sunday services to German and American troops at the Cassino front.

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A Nebraska Chaplain on the Cassino Front

Easter Sunday, 1944

An event that most people would dismiss with a tolerant smile crept into the news dispatches as timidly as a violet lifting its head in war-torn woodland, but its full meaning was recognized by at least one columnist. Writing from Washington April 11th, David Lawrence said:

“The big news of the week-end was not the number of tons of bombs dropped on German factories or the number of miles the Russian army advanced or the progress of our forces in the Pacific—these events were meaningful in themselves. But there was something else far more significant—it was the broadcasting by loud-speaker of two hours of Catholic and Protestant services on Easter Sunday to the German as well as the American troops at the Cassino front in Italy.

“The Associated Press reports that the idea originated with the regimental commander of American troops and three chaplains. One of them, Chaplain Oscar H. Reinboth, of Seward, Nebraska, a Lutheran minister, opened the services thus:

“As an American chaplain I greet Protestants and Catholics of the German army. Should not all Christendom be jubilant this day? Should not all people rejoice—now that Christ died and rose again for all men—for Germans and Americans alike? Therefore, I wish you also today, in the name of my soldiers, a happy Easter.”

“There was something courageous and sincere about that simple statement of faith in the midst of an atmosphere of bloodshed and conflict. For chaplains again and again are hard put to it to explain to the men in the armed services how war and Christianity can be reconciled. It is the fine determination of Chaplain Reinboth to maintain his faith and to express the spirit of brotherly love even for the enemy which makes his expression a notable one.”

Mr. Lawrence added the reflection that, because of our belief in the Fatherhood of God and its inevitable corollary, the

Brotherhood of Man, we hate no man as such. Though we feel a mighty hatred for the deeds of German people and their leaders, the doer of such deeds can be welcomed (at war's end) into fellowship like that accorded to our German brothers here in America, provided he gives proof of *sincere* reform, sincere observance of the natural decencies of life that form the basis of civilization. One who believes in Christ can do no less; one who follows His teaching can ask no more; those who have suffered most forgive most—even as He. It is the only way out. Peace cannot breathe in the atmosphere of revenge. "Hatred ceaseth not by hatred; hatred ceaseth only by love."