

CARDINAL RITTER BIRTHPLACE FOUNDATION INC

A RITTER MOMENT

Fr. Joseph E. Ritter at Fort Benjamin Harrison

Father Joseph E. Ritter was ordained on May 30, 1917 at St. Meinrad Archabbey by Indianapolis Bishop Joseph Chartrand, launching the start of his meteoric rise in the ranks of the Catholic Church. On July 7, Ritter was assigned to St. Patrick's Church in Indianapolis as Curate. A mere three months later, on October 12, he was assigned to Saints Peter and Paul Cathedral as assistant to Bishop Chartrand.

Forty days before his ordination America had entered the "Great War" in Europe. For three long years the United States resisted involvement, but now, on April 6, 1917 President Woodrow Wilson could hold out no longer and America joined the allied forces in what years later became known as World War I.

To the northeast of Indianapolis lay Fort Benjamin Harrison. The fledgling military base founded in 1903, and named for the Indianapolis-born 23rd President of the United States, was now abuzz with military activity. A steady stream of recruits from across the country flowed in and out of the complex. On July 21, 1918, Father Ritter accompanied Bishop Joseph Chartrand to the dedication of the new Knights of Columbus building at the military base.



Bishop Chartrand, left in photo, and Fr. Joseph Ritter, seated at right.



POST PHOTO:
Fifteen years later, (March 28, 1933), Fr. Joseph E. Ritter was ordained Auxiliary Bishop of Indianapolis by Bishop Chartrand. Following the death of Chartrand nine months later (December

8), Ritter was installed Bishop of the Diocese of Indianapolis (March 24, 1934). When Indianapolis was elevated to an Archdiocese (December 19, 1944), he became its first Archbishop, then the youngest in America. Pope Pius XII appointed him to lead the Archdiocese of St. Louis (October 8, 1946), and Fifteen years later Pope John XXIII elevated him to the College of Cardinals (January 18, 1961).