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**REV. JOSEPH MANTON, C.S.S.R.**



# The Bridge to Better Living

Nine addresses delivered on the Catholic Hour from January 3, 1954 through February 28, 1954 by the Rev. Joseph Manton, C.S.S.R. The program is produced by the National Council of Catholic Men in cooperation with the National Broadcasting Company.

BY  
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## IN A GLASS, DARKLY

Address Delivered on January 3, 1954

Up our way the windows of the department stores are already draped with the radiant white of the Annual Linen Sale like an indoor January snow-storm. This is a surer sign than the last burning, crackling Christmas Tree that the holidays are really over. The point of this post-holiday homily is to remark and regret that for some people (and for more this year than last because it is increasing all the time)—for some people the holidays went down with one stupendous gurgle, almost like a sinking ship, only with them it wasn't water—unless you want to call it fire-water.

Preceding the festive season (for these people it isn't the Holy Season, but just the holly season) magazine ads glow like a lit-up juke box with technicolor testimony to the convivial warmth of bottles blazing with the heraldry of red roses, golden crowns, white feathers. Nothing is ever said there (though I think something should be said here) of the thorns that may lurk under the roses, the hang-over headaches that can groan under too many crowns, and the cowardice that sometimes shows behind the white feather.

But—and let us make this

distinction at once and put it in sharp italics. What is wrong is not the use of liquor, but the abuse. You have only to look at that vivid vignette in the Gospels where the Saviour Himself in the midst of the wedding banquet changed water into wine, to realize that the normal, moderate, temperate use of alcoholic beverages is perfectly all right. But you have only to look at the increasing, intemperate, immoderate, abnormal consumption of liquor to know that is all wrong. Orators sometimes appeal to "sober statistics." That is not exactly the word here, but there are few people (except perhaps those that get stiff at bars or silly at parties) who would not concede that heavy drinking is coming on with *staggering* strides.

It is true that perhaps a priest does not get a balanced view. It is true he sees so much of the sickening effects of the abuse of drink in his parish rounds (because these are the families he has to visit and help) that he doesn't get a fair picture. But he cannot forget what he has seen—and this is the point—and is seeing more often now than ever before. It is the impression in this corner (because I cannot of course speak for other priests) that if a man

wants to dig his grave financially, or physically, or morally, he could not choose a better tool than a corkscrew.

Sometimes on a lovely Sunday afternoon, traffic will jam up at some avenue entering the city. Policemen will tell you, sometimes profanely, that "This congested bridge" or "That narrow street"—is the whole trouble. It's the bottle-neck! In the same way, when you find a home where the children are in tatters, and the mother is a broken-hearted martyr, and the home itself like a tiny suburb of hell—trace back the cause, and you will find it too is a bottle-neck. A brown bottle-neck!

Take the man, if you can call him that, who presides over such a home. Respectability, responsibility, integrity, even security—what do they mean to him?

Put them all in one scale of the balance, and in the other put a whiskey bottle. Does anyone doubt which one he will dive for, almost die for? Because he is half-sponge and half-jellyfish. These are not just abusive words flung out like tracer-bullets. I *think* that in zoology there is a close relation between a sponge and a jellyfish. I *know* that in life a drunkard is a sponge when it comes to absorbing liquor, but a jellyfish without backbone when it comes to saying "No."

Twenty years ago in another city I knew a fine handsome

hulk of a man. I'm ashamed to tell you his nationality. He had six of the most beautiful children I have ever seen. And many an evening they cowered in the doorway of a neighboring tenement, as Daddy came swaggering up the stoop wildly drunk, shouting out that he had just seen two antelopes with yo-yo's. Yes, they were afraid of him, but most of all they were ashamed. And shame in the heart of a child burns like a hot coal.

He lost his job, because it is quite a trick to hold a bottle and a job at once. He began to throw things about at home, and was sent to jail for thirty days. I visited him there, brought him cigarettes, helped get him out for Christmas. I'll never forget that Christmas Eve afternoon. We had got a tree for the family, and gifts for the children from a Welfare Society, and there he crouched, trimming the tree, the children around him, the first snow sifting down outside like a lace curtain. It was like a storybook. I went back to Church to hear confessions with bells ringing in my heart—And I found out that just one half-hour later, he clapped on his hat, walked out to the nearest tavern, and was carried in dead drunk late that night!

Is there any moral to it? I don't know. Sometimes I think such a man would be better dead than just dead drunk. Sometimes I think it has gone so far that only a miracle in re-



verse—Our Blessed Lord changing the wine into water—could do any good. But at least we can warn the perhaps unsuspecting young. Maybe I look very simple, but you would be surprised how often a girl will come up and tentatively begin to tell me all about her boyfriend . . . how handsome he is and how courteous and how ambitious and how clever, and maybe that he has wavy hair and three dimples. And then it comes out. It seems he has only one fault. Every six or eight weeks he drinks far too much. But the girl hurries on to say, "But, Father, this shouldn't prevent our marriage, should it? After all, only once every two months—I could put up with that. I should marry him, shouldn't I?" And her eyelashes go up like an awning in expectation. I don't think she gets the answer she wants. My answer is, "Girl, for your own sake, for your whole life's sake, for your future family's sake, for God's sake—don't risk marrying a sponge! If you throw a wedding ring into a puddle, it won't dry up the puddle. The ring will be lost and stained on the bottom!"

Aside from the personal unhappiness that often pops out with the cork, consider the abuse of liquor, and *Sin*. There are critics of English literature who think that our language has no lovelier lines than those used by the poet (Crashaw, I think) to describe the very miracle of the changing of the water into

wine at Cana. He says, "The modest water saw its God, and blushed"—blushed into crimson wine. And well might the wine blush red! Red for all the future abuse of liquor! Red for the red and purple-veined noses of drunkards which burn (if it be not blasphemous to say so) like sanctuary lights before their God, because of such St. Paul says, "Their god is their belly." Red for the red ink of bills and debts piled up in the drunkard's home. Red for the red blood spilled in bar-room brawls—and there is no more pathetic sight on this old earth than a human being lying there, perhaps dying there, in a drunken stupor, his glassy eyes staring upward like the eyes of a dead fish.

The wine blushed red. Red for the red traffic lights through which heavy-drinking drivers heedlessly speed. Red for the red tail-lights when they come to a stop in a lonely lane. When they drive, they are a menace to life and limb; and when they park, they are a menace to morality. Red for the red blushes of the young girl who first finds out that it is not "Wine, woman and song"—but wine, woman and wrong! Don't these girls realize that alcohol blurs the brain like a fog, unleashes passions like a wild beast, snaps will-power like a toothpick? And that in some circumstances a little liquor is too much! Otherwise why is it that later on when people bring their sad

story to a rectory parlor they so often end, "That's all, Father, except—except it never would have happened, if I hadn't been drinking."

With God or His Church there is no double standard, but even more revolting than a man "under the influence" as the kindly phrase has it, is a tipsy, maudlin woman. I can imagine a type of man who might want to pass an evening with a painted, fragile toy of a girl who could lift cocktail after cocktail with him, and who might even be a switch drinker—that is when her right arm got tired she turned to the left. But I can't imagine any man choosing, such a creature to be the Queen of his home, and the mother of his children. Can *you* imagine a grandfather with curling white mustachio's dandling his great-grandson on his knee and saying, "Why sure I knew your great-grandmother when she was a young lady! What did she look like? Oh, I can see her now. The gold in her hair, the stars in her eyes, the roses in her cheeks, the bottle at her lips—and the words coming out mumbling and stumbling as she sat there on the sofa loaded with giggle-water!"

You may faintly smile, but it is never a joke when a woman's drinking hurts her home. Not too long ago I gave a Novena, and there was a Petition Box, and one of the petitions was scrawled in the wide looping hand of a boy—you know, they get about two words to the line—and the note said, "Dear Father, I am a boy and I would like you to pray for my mother, as she drinks a lot. I am making this Novena for her. She is a good mother when she does not drink, and us children need her. Hoping this Novena will change her. Hoping it will." And with all the simplicity of a boy, he signed his name. I checked up quietly in the parish school, and sure enough, *there was* such a boy. Seventh Grade.

Isn't that sermon enough? I pray Our Blessed Lord, through the powerful intercession of *His* Mother who saw them push a sponge of vinegar into His Holy Face, on the cross and He took it in reparation for the abuse of drink—oh, if there is anyone out there who is abusing drink, give him the grace to cut it down, or if necessary, to cut it out! Hoping She will change him—hoping She will! God bless you!

## HIGHWAY TO HEAVEN

Address Delivered on January 10, 1954

Since last we met over the air, the Church celebrated a feast which, come to think of it, I have never heard a Catholic layman mention—the Feast of Epiphany. Mostly it is called the Feast of the Three Kings, and at any Christmas Crib last week these colorful gentlemen had dismounted and parked their picturesque camels close by. This little talk is not going to be about either the camels or the kings, except that on Epiphany night I was thinking about camels as means of transportation. And I tell you these long-legged, swaying beasts, loping rhythmically, padding silently across the desert, seemed to have their points.

You see, from ten at night till six in the morning the thoroughfare that runs in front of our rectory is Big Truck Boulevard. And that night they were whizzing by so steadily, booming so heavily under the window I couldn't get to sleep. Of course no preacher should ever get insomnia: all he has to do is get up and read some of his old sermons. But for this I was too lazy, and since it was impossible to quiet the trucks and unchristian to curse them, I just lay there thinking about them, and the first thing you know it

seemed they were preaching a sermon to me!

Here they were, cargo camels twentieth century style, these trucks, huge battleships of the road, grey or green or brilliant red, outlined with amber bulbs, rumbling along with all sorts of loads, milk or oil or furniture; pair after pair of headlights like shining yellow eyes, zooming on through the night with a sullen roar, riding eventually into the pink dawn, then with a change of riders, highballing along other highways under blue skies and into a far-off flaming sunset . . . I guess if you look hard enough you can see adventure and romance even in hubcaps and grease.

Curious thing, though, about a truck: The bigger part of it (almost like in a human being) they call the body. But the other part, the more important part, is the cab. Almost like the soul. Because there, in the cab, is what you might call its principle of life, the motor—what makes the truck go, and without which the truck would be as motionless as a corpse. And in that cab turns your steering wheel, like free will. You can drive right, drive left, even drive off the road—but you take the consequences. Isn't

that what free will means? And right beyond the steering wheel glows the speedometer, just as plain as conscience itself, registering, reminding you when you are overstepping bounds.

When a truck starts to climb a hill it seems almost human the way it grinds and grunts and inches slowly up, like a man with bent head and drooping shoulders plodding up the slope of trouble. "For the heart of a man is a heavy load for a man to bear alone." But how simple and easy it is for truck or man to go roaring downhill! It may take a man sixty years to become a saint, but he can land at the bottom of Skid Row in only six months. It all depends on who is in control, the soul or the body. Put the truck on as high a hill as you like. Then, up in the cab, shut off the motor and release the brake. The body of the truck, always eager to throw its weight around, will exert its pressure and force the whole vehicle down, faster and faster. It is no different in a man's moral life. The body, left to itself and all brakes off, has a natural inclination to go downhill; and if you let it, the end must be a wild careening ride and a shattered moral wreck. Nobody knows this better than the fellow who thought he knew how far he could go, how far he could let his emotions and desires coast along before it would be really dangerous and out of control. Just let passion get

rolling a little bit, and it picks up fearful momentum. And the only sure way of stopping it is never to let it get started. You are not a beast; you are a man; and the control should be in the cab, in the human soul with its conscience and its will-power and its moral code. Oh the pity of it that when you counsel modesty and purity to young people they think these are the steel bars of a jail shutting them off from happiness. They may be steel bars, all right, but they are the steel handrails on a bridge, that perilous bridge that swings between youth and maturity, and only those know how necessary they are who have fallen off and lie at the bottom, bruised and broken. Or, to get back to trucks, aren't some trucks simply marked "Inflammable"?

Most trucking jobs are long hauls over the highway toward the horizon, and you could hardly get a better picture, a sharper modern parable of a man journeying toward eternity than the driver in the cab of his truck as he rolls along the grey stretch of road toward his far-off, unseen destination. The little sign on the windshield says, "No Riders," and in the cab of his own soul every man rides alone. You and nobody else has the responsibility for *you*. And every driver has basically the same obligation. It doesn't matter what kind of cargo the truck is carrying,

whether it is Christmas trees or brand new cars—the idea is always to get to your destination and bring what they expect. Isn't it the same way on the highway of life? Whether you are the conductor of a subway car or the conductor of a symphony orchestra, the whole idea is so to do your work, so to live your life that you will be doing what God wants and eventually reach your journey's end, Heaven.

Ask the average truck driver what are his thoughts as he sits behind the wheel, and you find the one constant overpowering thought is just to get where he is going. What he passes along the way is of very minor consideration. Enchanting scenery, eye-catching bill-boards, famous landmarks — these he goes wheeling past with hardly a glance. They are on his route, but he is on his way! His eyes are focused on the road, his thoughts fixed on the goal. All the rest is trivial. The only thing that matters is reach the right address and deliver the goods, intact and unspoiled. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could be like that in our lives, *passing through* this world but making our main concern *the end* of it all, God and Heaven and Salvation? All right then, by the same yardstick wouldn't we be pitifully foolish to let something along the road so distract us, take up our attention, fascinate us — something like

money or sex or hate or ambition or any mere creature—so that before we know it, our eyes have wandered off the road, and maybe at that very moment we go hurtling off the sharp wild curve of sudden death into the wrong eternity?

Sometimes for a truck-driver, danger leaps up from the very opposite source. I mean he is looking at the road so long and so steadily that after a while he doesn't really see the road. They call it highway hypnosis. Here's a competent driver with a good night's sleep behind him on an open highway with a perfect view and no mechanical trouble, and he suddenly goes crashing off the road to disaster. The best explanation seems to be that the grey monotony of the road lulled him, hypnotized him, drugged him into a kind of trance, and before he knew it, the wheel loosened in his grip—just for a couple of moments—and he went roaring to destruction.

It's sad, but aren't there plenty of people like that spiritually? Year after year they stolidly, languidly follow the road of life, hardly realizing what it is all about. Day in, day out they drift along the same dull round of duties, automatically, mechanically, almost in a daze. Their eyes are blank, their soul is numb, their heart is wooden, their spirit dried-up, dead. Theirs? This is a danger

to any of us! From time to time we all have to stir ourselves, rouse ourselves, make ourselves sharply aware that we are *on the road to eternity*, that we carry a precious cargo (our very salvation), and that there are dangers all about us! Remind ourselves that life is more than typing letters or driving nails or cooking meals or filling gas tanks! We are the children of God, on the way home to Our Father who is in Heaven—and all these material things are but as steps on the stairs as we go up to Him! Life is a prosaic boring journey only to those that forget God is the goal!

And, like the truck-drivers, we had better take no chances along the way. It may surprise you to know that the most cautious of all drivers (except perhaps the men who pilot the school-bus) are the broad-shouldered boys behind the big steering-wheel of a truck. Haven't you ever noticed, for example, how on a dark afternoon or a foggy morning a truck will drone along all lit up like a theatre marquee? They take no chances. Haven't you often heard how a truck-driver who feels himself growing drowsy will immediately pull over to the side of the road for a few minutes of exercise or even sleep? They take no chances. If it is a question of a risky road, or a longer road, they unhesitatingly swing off on the

longer. They take no chances. Certain roads they have to keep off altogether: "Trucks Not Allowed." And it might be well for us if mentally we pictured certain books or plays or places as marked with the warning sign. "Decent People Not Allowed." The trucks are forbidden because with their tonnage they would ruin certain thoroughfares. We ought to keep off the *dirt roads* of literature and entertainment because they can ruin us—or at least spatter us with mire, or in some moral mud-hole bog us down.

I have heard from salesmen who drive long hours to cover their broad territories that truck-drivers are not only the most careful drivers on the road, but also the most courteous and considerate. Many a motorist broken down in the middle of nowhere with nothing but bleak miles of highway stretching away on either side, has found in the truck-driver a huge grimey angel who somehow got him started again. When you are lost, a truck driver really seems *willing* to show you the way. When bright beams meet on a midnight road, the truck (which could play the roll of bully) as a rule is the first to click the switch and dim the lights. And, if there is any danger ahead or any trouble (even if the trouble is a state trooper!) the truck will always blink you a warning.

Isn't it all a heart-warming, practical, modern example of kindness to our neighbor as we move along the road of life, and meet opportunities every day? Doesn't it accent the fact that in this breathless age we have plenty of intellectual brilliance and industrial genius and executive skill—only the men tend to become like their own machines, polished, efficient, impersonal as steel, without heart or soul. We have too many clever people; what we need are kind people, good people. And the truck driver is the

modern Good Samaritan of the road!

So we close as we began. We turn from the trucks to the camels, with the thought that times have changed. The Three Wise Men who rode them were drawn to Christ by the splendor of a Star, like converts attracted by the sparkling genius of some priest, but nowadays most converts are first drawn to religion by the simple kindness of some human heart on fire with the love of God and radiating that warmth among men. God bless you!

## THE LOCK IN WEDLOCK

Address Delivered on January 17, 1954

In tiny mission chapel and towering metropolitan cathedral this Sunday morning, Catholic priests have been reading the Gospel where our Lord goes to a wedding. I don't remember reading that He ever went to a divorce. In fact some of His statements, like "two in one flesh" and "let no man put asunder" give you the impression that in wedlock He put the accent strongly on the lock. Late confirmation of the wisdom of this comes from the most unexpected of sources. Maybe you too have read how Russia has done a neat, clicking, right-about-face in this matter of easy divorces. And maybe you remember when in Russia all you needed for a divorce was a wife and a postcard. Now in the Soviet Union it is as hard to get a divorce as it is to get a deep-freeze. Because it has slowly dawned on the dull bureaucratic mind that a nation is made up of families the way a wall is made up of bricks, and if the bricks begin to break up, your wall is about as solid and cohesive as a jigsaw puzzle.

Yet while godless and backward Russia begins to tighten the bolts on shaky marriages, some bright strong American

minds continue to think it liberal and progressive to give away easy divorces like Superman badges, so that America can become the undisputed champion in the league of the broken home. I use the general term broken home because you have to remember that for every official divorce there is probably an equal number of separations and desertions. These cases do not go down in the books as divorce cases, but they cut just as deeply into human hearts as tragedies. Unhappiness doesn't have to be official. The worst of it is that the weather report for tomorrow's marriages is stormier than today's. At least the joyless experts who make a study of statistics, and then shinny out on a limb waving their predictions, are morbidly confident that in fifty years, one marriage out of every two will be popping out of the toaster a charred and ruined reject.

By that time America will really be "the land of the free." But let the twenty-first century pick up its own pieces. Why is it that even now the bridal gown is so often changed for the divorce suit? According to the records it seems most bad marriages drift on the rocks



when they have just about cleared the harbor; that is, in the third, fourth, and fifth year. You might expect the cause to be anything from in-laws to sex, but if you listen to the young casualties themselves, they will tell you most often that they were disappointed with marriage, disillusioned. Marriage was not the mirage that their flushed and feverish early love had painted so hopefully on the horizon. In those days they had wondered how they could ever have lived in those wasted days before they had known each other . . . before this wonderful, splendid, utterly darling creature had suddenly given a new meaning to life, and made the world glorious and vibrant overnight, and existence itself a joy, and even pouring rain a pleasure if they were walking through it together, and a long wearisome trainride worth every boring minute of it if the beloved was waiting at the other end. But almost before the pelted rice is out of the hair and the star-dust out of the eyes, each begins to see that the angel married, has some very peculiar angles. The cover girl is never the same glamorous creature in the rest of the book. There are plenty of dull chapters, plenty of irritating footnotes, and plenty of unexpected pictures of kimono and curlers shuffling round a breakfast table. On the other hand, Prince Charming is never quite

the courtly personage he was when he was courting. Quite possibly he leaves a trail of ashes, clothes and faults all over the house. So what? Isn't all this the history of practically every marriage that ever walked down the magnificent aisle of organ music and orange blossoms out into the hard, cold, shocking world of reality?

But in former days they must have had the maturity to face it. Maybe now it is Momism that doesn't let the American boy grow up on his own, hardened, self-reliant, and prepared for set-backs. Maybe with the girl it is the foolish romances, as sweet and unsubstantial as cotton candy, in movies and magazines that makes the future bride imagine even a mop in technicolor. Does it take so much maturity to realize that marriage, like the year, has its own different seasons, and it cannot always be spring? But for those who have the common sense to see this, the wisdom to accept it, the courage to face it, the loyalty to see it through . . . there are joys and rewards and compensations in every season of married life! Of course married life presumes love. And love means simply that you think so much of the other person that self is always second. In life together, once self swaggers into the picture, from either side, romance becomes rivalry and the soft voice learns to hiss. They often forget that

before you can love anyone deeply, you have to know that person deeply. That is why a swift, whirlwind courtship often ends like a whirlwind . . . with the ruin of two lives and the wreckage of a young home in its impetuous wake. If courtship were merely a physical affair, like kissing and petting, then almost any young man might *marry* any young girl, each convinced that this would be a good deal and a grand game. But the whole purpose of courtship is not to know the other party physically, but to know the other person mentally and temperamentally, to see if your individual traits of character your likes and dislikes will orchestrate together without too many jangling discords. The more prudent you are in keeping company before marriage the less chance you take of parting company after marriage. And if you do not spend about a year sizing up your beloved's faults and virtues and moods and disposition, the cold figures of case histories imply you are not likely to spend *many years* united in marriage.

How about finances and marriage, or matrimony and the matter of money? They have made a study of that question too, and it seems that most authorities agree that the husband's income has nothing to do with the happiness of the marriage. Whether the man of

the house is a laborer or a lawyer, whether he goes to work in overalls toting a dinner pail, or in a pin-striped business suit jauntily swinging a brief case, these circumstances are only like the picture frame, sometimes plain, sometimes gilded, and have nothing to do with the inner picture, the marriage itself. I like that finding; it scores heavily for real love. In fact the only exception is that: when times are more prosperous, divorces are more numerous. I guess hard knocks tend to hammer people together, while the soft breeze of luxury is apt to blow them apart.

But if insurance could be taken out against the break-up of a home, do you know which home would be the poorest risk and therefore would have to pay the highest premium? The home in which for some years the husband and wife each morning leave the house together for their respective businesses. Granted that there are exceptional cases, normally when the wife works she is in danger of undermining her marriage by three separate tunnels. First, the working wife comes flouncing home flourishing her own pay-check, always a silent threatening weapon of independence, whereas if she would do her work for him at home, and he at his job for her, they would grow like two branches on one bough, bound by interdependence. Secondly,

if all day long she mingle with other men in the business world, she may glide into dangerous friendships, especially if the sea is running a little rough in her own domestic world. And thirdly, she will be channelling the major portion of her time and energy outside, so that only a slender trickle will dribble into the home. Can anyone doubt that such a home is sure to suffer . . . in its care, its importance, its very spirit?

Naturally—or unnaturally!—if there are no children, there may not be much home to take care of. For that reason a miniature empty cradle ought to be the class-pin of the divorced, because the chances are ten to one that if the married couple multiply (that is, beget offspring) they will not divide (that is get a divorce.) Curious thing about children: they may tear a house apart, but somehow they keep together a home.

May I say here in a sympathetic parenthesis that in those marriages where God in *His* wisdom withholds the gift of children, He generally compensates by giving husband and wife an even greater mutual love. And such a wife in many ways is God's gift to a parish, because without her (who can give to parish projects her leisure and her enthusiasm,) where would many of our parish activities be?

Some divorcees ought to wear

as their class-pin the yellow triangle. Yellow because of being a traitor to their marriage vows; triangle because the triangle (for example the husband, the wife, the other woman) is the arch-enemy of the family circle. Is it any wonder that one survey claimed that the real cause for most divorces during the war years and immediately after was adultery? But then you cannot argue with lust; you cannot even plead with it. All you can do is pity it and pray for it.

At the moment, the most monumental mockery in the English language are those five monosyllables, "Till Death do us part." By the way I saw Death a couple of weeks ago. He wore a double-breasted grey suit, clipped grey mustache, thinning grey hair, and eye-glasses. He was getting into a cab and he had just thrown away a cigar. I have the solemn word of at least a hundred people that he was Death, because they had vowed to be husband and wife "till Death do us part." Well, he parted them—in a courtroom. He must be Death.

He, this judge—is this Death? Not as God meant it, in raising marriage to the dignity of a Sacrament. Not as Nature meant it, because the baby looking up so helplessly from its crib, the boy at school, the youth in adolescence, yes and the wife who walked down her

wedding aisle longing to be loved forever—even after she had given her youth and beauty to the bearing and raising of these children—she as well as they needs someone to cherish her and leave her never!

In any marriage there will be flaws and faults, on both sides. And if love is blind,—it should not have the cataracts removed right after the wedding. It must learn to overlook and to understand; to readjust and to compromise; to realize that the marriage ceremony is a *contract*: from then on the *job* be-

gins, and like any job, entails hard work, changes, disappointment, courage. Above all, it is a contract for life, because if either party keeps open a *back door* of escape, divorce, then when things get rugged, the temptation will be to slip through that exit, give up the job, and skip off. Nail that door of divorce shut! This is the post you have sworn to hold till death, and if you pray, Our Lord Himself, even if it takes another miracle as at the marriage of Cana, will turn your tears into the wine of joy. God bless you.

## JANUARY INVENTORY

Address delivered on January 24, 1954

Spiritually our time has been called the Age of Novenas. Every priest wishes to Heaven it were known as the Age of the Mass. Between a Novena service and the Sacrifice of the Mass there is no more comparison than between a devotional vigil light flickering away at a shrine, and the great crimson sanctuary lamp blazing forth the Presence of God at the Main Altar. But people like Novenas, partly I think because they participate more actively in the service, and partly because they are praying for some particular personal intention. This is not bad; it is merely the lesser of two goods. So we encourage people to make Novenas, (and there will be more of them during this Marian Year) but we should also remind them that a novena is not just spiritual confectionery or a spiritual order-blank or a spiritual toy like a kind of pious yo-yo. And since this is January, the month of inventory, what could be a better time for taking stock on our Novena (whichever one it may be) and us?

Say to yourself: "See here, I've been making this 'Perpetual' Novena for some time now. What has it done for me?" I don't mean what has it done for that arthritis which we

hoped to get rid of, nor for that apartment which we hoped to get hold of; nor that annoying neighbor we wanted God to inspire to move, nor for that diamond ring we wanted God to inspire a certain somebody to give us . . . but what has the Novena done for me myself, my character, my life, my soul?

I have been preaching at a weekly Novena for the last fifteen years, and I have encountered some weird requests even to the blessing of sweep-stake tickets with the sugared inducement that in event of a win I should get half. I remember during the war one woman told me she was making that Novena to get butter. All right, but the first purpose of every Novena should be to glorify God and to make ourselves better—I mean to become better in thought and word and deed in the eye of God. Otherwise our Novena is in danger of dropping to a mere game of Gimme, or becoming a spiritual charm bracelet, or a religious cosmetic—a kind of powder and paint deftly applied to the soul.

Maybe that powder and paint idea is not too bad; with this observation: that while the illustration is lifted out of the life of the ladies, the application fits just as snugly into the lives of

men. Suppose then, it is Monday or Tuesday or Wednesday evening, and Noreen Novena is prettying up before hurrying off to church. In her left hand she holds a compact, like an artist's palette, and begins a little exterior decorating. This of course is perfectly all right, though sometimes I think the Novena preacher, booming the attendance, is misunderstood when he asks his congregation to bring a new face to the services. Anyway Noreen here goes on making minor repairs or even extensive alterations at the point where God left off, and as she smiles into the compact's little mirror, she suddenly becomes confidential with it. "You know, little mirror, I was just thinking. Here I've been taking you to the Novena in my handbag for the past two years. And you know something? I haven't changed a bit!" "Right!" retorts the mirror. All mirrors reflect; this one does its reflecting out loud. "You haven't changed. The same old faults, worn into your soul like stale powder into that puff. The same old toying with dangerous occasions of sin. And don't try to tell me otherwise. Sure, you brought me to church every Monday, but you brought me other places too—where you were not quite so archangelic. Now do you remember when . . ."

"Humph!" She tosses her shoulders indignantly and swishes her hair as though shaking off some insect buzzing

around her. Is she hearing things? Anyway, she goes on to crayon her lips into a dainty cupid's bow in a shade that was probably advertised as "Sunset in the Sierras" but which sometimes turns out like Firebox on the Corner. But not this time. "Well," murmurs the mirror, "not so bad! Some of your faces should be in Museums. You are very skilled at making-up. But why is it you never think of making-up with those people with whom you have quarrelled? You don't go in for that kind of making-up do you? No, but you go to your Novena every Monday and with your pretty painted lips shout your prayers, but it would take a chisel to pry open those lips to say a Christian word to so and so, or so and so. When you pass *them* it is war-paint you are wearing, and your nose suddenly tilts up like an anti-aircraft gun. Oh, you are in the right and they are in the wrong! But, is Christianity a law court? You are not supposed to greet them for their sake because they are right and so it is only just; nor for your sake because you are right, but you feel generous; but for God's sake, no matter who is right or who is wrong, because He wants it!"

Miss Noreen Novena doesn't like this rebuke one bit, and *bang!* she slaps the powder-puff so hard against her nose that a little white cloud of powderdust drifts off like smoke from a cannon. "Ah . . . there's another

thing I've been noticing lately" says the mirror. "That atom-bomb temper. In church aren't you the sweet one, so gentle and so devout! At the Novena, Noreen is a little lamb. But at home, Noreen can be a pretty little panther, snarling, snapping, surly, selfish . . ."

But before the mirror could finish, Noreen clicked the compact shut, and went clicking off on her high heels (and probably her high horse) to the Novena. The stained-glass windows wouldn't be so gabby.

Honestly, though, isn't there something in what the mirror said? What is the difference between standing before a little mirror and putting on your cheek a dab of rouge and a pat of powder, and kneeling before a little shrine and just putting on your soul a little patch of prayer and a little snatch of hymn—if that is all the Novena means! In both cases isn't it all on the surface, only superficial? Don't they both effect a mere temporary change, a passing glow? Isn't it true that neither of them gets inside to produce a permanent improvement?

No Novena or Sodality or Devotion is meant to be a mere spiritual bon-bon, wrapped in attractive tin-foil. Rather that weekly half-hour should be more like a tiny cake of yeast dropped in among all the other hours of the week and raising them to a higher level. But it never will, unless we go to the Novena not just praying for the

goods of this world, but *also* to be good in this world.

Several years ago a Pastor told me that a lady-lecturer in his parish hall had said among other things that some people were like Christmas trees and some were like apple trees. Who she was, how she developed it I don't know, but I do think that this divides the people who go to a Novena sharply and vividly. Take a Christmas tree for example. It goes big for glamor; it is all razzle-dazzle; it loves to stand there with its gaudy ornaments and necklace of colored bulbs, the center of attraction. It doesn't do anything. It just stands there. It doesn't give anything; it just gets. It expects you to lay presents at its feet. It isn't a strong tree; a little push and over it goes; it has no roots. And is it not true; in a few days the needles start turning brown and falling off, and the tree is flung out as a fire-hazard.

Now the apple tree is different. No show-off, no splurge of artificial razzle-dazzle. It stands there quietly, naturally; and it is always *giving*: in the spring, frail white blossoms like orchard snows for poet or painter; in the summer cool sheltering shade for the wayfarer; in the fall luscious mellow fruits. It is a strong tree. When a storm comes, it may bend and shudder and groan—but its roots are firm and it does not fail. And always it is growing!

So at every church service

there are Christmas tree people, and apple tree people. The Christmas tree crowd are all a-flutter over the externals, the color, the lights, the music, the incense—God help us even the sermon. Like the Christmas Tree they expect some favor to be laid at their feet. Like the Christmas Tree, they are not strong; the first push of temptation and down they go. They are not true; as soon as the Novena service is out, their piety fades and falls away like the needles, and they are in the world and of the world and ready for the ways of the world.

The apple tree people are different. They don't bother too much with the externals of the Novena. It doesn't particularly matter to them which priest gives the sermon, because they are not devoted to any particular "Father" but to the Mother of God. When temptation stirs them, they may for a moment waver, but their resolution grips

the ground like deep roots, and they don't go down. And above all, they go on bearing virtuous fruit—more frequent confessions, more fervent Communions, more little daily Visits to Our Blessed Lord. And above all, more frequent and more intelligent assistance at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

Anyway, what better time than the beginning of the year to take an inventory of our church-going? Especially when we lift our eyes to that other tree, the gaunt tree of the cross, lifting its dark, stark branches against the somber Good Friday sky, and dripping slow splashes of Blood like the last red leaves of autumn. Shorn of the foliage of all smaller matters, the cross stands there as simple and straight as a sign-post. And it says: "Seek ye first the *Kingdom of Heaven*, and all these things shall be added unto you!"

God bless you!



## QUEEN OF THE COMMONPLACE

Address Delivered on January 31, 1954

The preacher in the pulpit practically has a captive audience. True, they *can* get up and walk out but; they generally don't. But the man behind a microphone can be flipped far into outer space by the mere flick of a dial. So in hopes of soothing itching fingers, all the speaking experts implore the radio preacher to begin with an arresting, ear-catching sentence. It always reminds me of the high school boy who had the same idea and so began his composition. "Hades!" (only he spelled Hades differently) "Hades!" growled the Duchess, as she lit another cigar."

I'm afraid all I can say by way of introduction is that I've been looking at this week's calendar, and noticing that Tuesday is the Feast of Our Lady's Purification, and wondering if you sometimes get the same thoughts about all these feasts of Our Lady as I do. Well, it's an easy error and it needs continual correction. I mean, don't you sometimes think to yourself, "Mary has so many feasts!" (That is true; they just about sprinkle the calendar like holly-berries.) "So, Mary must have led a crowded, colorful, thrilling life!" (That is wrong.)

Certainly her feasts move along the avenue of the church-

year like a bright procession of gorgeous floats—the Annunciation, the Visitation, the Presentation, the Immaculate Conception, the Assumption, and all the rest. But notice this. The last two feasts I mentioned, the Immaculate Conception in December and the Assumption in August, on the calendar have not six months between them. But in the life of Our Lady they were separated by more than sixty years! A crowded, colorful life? It is we who do the crowding—crowding the events of a long lifetime into twelve short months. A colorful life? On the calendar Mary's life may seem a gay parade of festivals, but in her kitchen as she lived it, it was just a run of routine days, monotonous months, commonplace years.

And why not? In all things save sin, was not Mary one of ourselves? The soft airs of spring were gentle upon her face. Winter winds chilled her. The summer sun bronzed her brow. Wasn't her home like any of the other little stone houses in the village, a spinning wheel by the hearth, brown-crusted bread in the oven, a jaunty plume of blue smoke curling from the chimney? It was between the fireplace and the well, between the loom and

the broom that Mary passed her humdrum, uneventful hours — her life!

If you wanted a colorful, dramatic patron among the woman saints, you would be well advised to skip this house-wife of Nazareth. I would tell you to take St. Joan of Arc, really a glamorous figure in her silver armor, on her stately white charger, under the silken banner of France, leading an army into battle! Or take St. Catherine of Sienna, the counsellor of Popes and Kings, actually going back and forth across Europe making peace between enemy camps! Or take St. Elizabeth of Hungary, a glittering queen living her life of hidden sainthood amid the rustle of brocades and the flash of jewels. Yes, take them all — but never forget that the highest saint in heaven is still a simple mother, a quiet home-body whose whole world was bounded by walls and windows.

But is not this the very reason why she should be *our* patroness? In the indifferent glance of the world are we too not just ordinary people? Our names do not stream in black banners across newspaper headlines. Our deeds do not spurt out in blue flashes from a telegraph key, news of the moment! Our successes do not gleam in white bulbs over theatre lobbies. No, we are ordinary people leading ordinary lives. Tuesday is just a dull echo of Monday; and Thursday

is a faint carbon-copy of Wednesday. We walk in the unexciting footprints of our yesterdays.

So, like Mary we live a commonplace life. But why then can't we take the one additional step and like Mary live that commonplace life *for God*? Don't you see that every time Mary tossed a stick of wood into the crackling red fireplace, she could say to herself, "I am warming this room for God!" Every time she laid the earthenware plates on the supper table, she could think, "I'm setting this table for God!" And a glance out the window showed her Jesus and Joseph trudging up the road from the carpenter shop ready to sit down to a workingman's meal. An ordinary, commonplace life? Absolutely. But an ordinary, commonplace life lived for God!

Can we do that? Can we glorify our monotony, dedicate our routine? The answer should be as simple as the five fingers on our hand, five words that consecrate a day to God: "All for Thee, my God!" Say this after your morning prayers, and it means that everything you do that day you are offering to God as a prayer. And whether you are an operator at a switchboard, or a teacher at a blackboard, or a housewife at an ironing-board; whether you run a typewriter or run a truck; whether you fill teeth or fill gas tanks—the good God will accept it as a prayer. He knows

that we cannot be always praying—but isn't it a tragedy to let all the rest of the time go wasted as regards gaining merit for Heaven?

How many hours do you give to God in a week? I mean directly, specifically to God. Count your Sunday Mass, morning and evening prayers, rosaries, and you do better than average if you give Him three hours. Three hours out of one hundred and sixty eight. The next week too, three hours for God and eternity, and one hundred and sixty five useless for eternity. At the end of a life of seventy years what a pathetic little pile of merit for Heaven, compared to the massive mountain of life lived, and work done, but useless for eternity!

But say that little prayer each morning, and mean it, and it will in a way turn a cooking range or a carpenter's lathe into an altar. Repeat it during the day. Don't go round, of course, mumbling "All for Thee, my God! All for Thee, my God!" like a broken record. You may go — well, north-north-west. But before the more important actions of the day, renew it; say it again.

However we ought to point out that before such drab actions can be burnished into a prayer, there are two conditions. But they are conditions and not catches. The first is that we must not be in the state of mortal sin. Naturally. From

filthy fingers God does not accept offerings. The second condition is that the work itself be not a sin. Otherwise you have the absurd situation of a man heaving a brick through a jeweler's window, scooping up bracelets and brooches and rings the while he piously murmurs, "All for Thee, my God!"

No. Actions that are bad, automatically rule themselves out. Actions that are good, automatically register themselves for our eternal reward. What I am pleading for is the vast majority of actions that lie in between—the thousands of "neutral" actions, all the way from baking a cake to filling out an income-tax report. Ah, what a super-natural good intention you would have to make *there!*

Somewhere I have read that the most gorgeous sunset is the result of our central sun pouring its golden beams on millions of tiny particles of common dust hanging in the atmosphere, giving us the purples and pinks, the orange and scarlet that turn the western sky into an autumn hillside of color. Just so, one central golden good intention shining upon all the thousands of tiny, grimy, insignificant, workaday items in our ordinary day transforms them into a spectacle of splendor in the eyes of God.

If I may illustrate—with a modern parable. Once upon twenty years ago, there lived in Dublin a humble workman. And every morning on his way

to work he would drop into his parish church and say a few prayers. On his way out he would stop for a moment before a marble statue in the back of the church. It was a statue of Christ the Worker, sitting down after a hard day's work, His shoulders stooped, His weary hands crossed on His lap. The man in the Dublin overalls would put his hands into the Hands of Christ, say just a few words, pick up his lunch-box and go hurrying out.

Day after day, like that, and year after year. And one day, just before he was due to retire from his job, the old worker collapsed at his bench in the foundry. They brought him to the hospital, gave him the Last Rites, and had just finished the prayers for the dying, when the grey haired old fellow looked at the flickering candle and smiled. "So this is the day," he whispered, "the day when all the lights go out. Because for me they will all go out—the bright lights in the stores and theatres, the blue lights in the foundry, the soft lights of home. And into the dark I can carry only this one light, this blessed

candle, the light of faith. When I think how long I lived under those other lights, and how hard I worked, and how the grave is only a few feet wide, but you can't bring anything across. You can't take it with you . . ."

And then he spoke faster so that the candle-flame danced. "I don't care. Every day for thirty years I have put my work into His Hands, and offered it to Him as a prayer. You can't take it with you? I have sent it on ahead! And it will be waiting for me, in the vaults of heaven."

Somebody put the candle into his pale fingers. And he seemed like a traveller in the olden days who had come to the end of his journey, and now at the inn took his candle and was going upstairs, up to his well-deserved rest, eternal rest. And that's the way the Foundryman of Dublin went to meet the Carpenter of Nazareth.

In this little talk I have spoken to you perhaps two thousand words. Forget them all, but never forget five of them. Use them every day of your life — "All for Thee, My God!"

God bless you!

## NO STRANGE GODS

Address Delivered on February 7, 1954

One night thirteen men sat down to supper. The next day two of them, Jesus and Judas were dead. This was the origin of the absurd superstition about number thirteen. Because of a mere coincidence, that poor number has limped through history like a leper, ringing its outcast bell and hoarsely warning every one to keep away from it. You may have read of the hotel in the mid-west where if you discover to your consternation that there are thirteen people in your dinner party, the management will graciously provide you with a dummy figure attired in faultless evening dress. Naturally his name is Louis the Fourteenth. I suppose that if some item on your bill should amount to thirteen dollars, the hotel would be willing even to change it to a felicitous fourteen.

A couple of years ago I was a minor casualty in a major Catholic Hospital, and during that delightful period of convalescence when I was once more vertical and could prowl the corridors, I noticed there was not one sick room marked thirteen. On one floor they ran 210, 211, 212, 214. On the next, 311, 312, 314— and so on. Here, you must admit, is another very wise reason for forbidding chil-

dren to visit in a hospital. The school teaches them to count 211, 212, 213, 214. But in hospital-mathematics, thirteen suddenly submerges like a submarine. The child might wonder if in the hospital, arithmetic itself wasn't a little sick.

Of course the nuns in charge shake discouraged bonnets and protest, "It is not our fault. It is the patients. The pressure comes from them." Apparently when a patient is being wheeled into a room, one thing he dislikes is looking up and seeing a number-plate on the door blink down on him with the ominous, sinister, never-to-be-mentioned thirteen. For the same reason (if you can call it reason) there are tall buildings, twenty stories high, that still do not have a thirteenth floor. And it is gradually dawning on me why on the popular overnight boats that used to ply between Boston and New York, I never had any difficulty getting a room, no matter how late I applied. I used to get number thirteen—used to ask for it. It was quiet, comfortable, cheap—and always available!

Thirteen! But the Thirteen Colonies did rather nicely don't you think?

However thirteen is only the grand marshal in this parade

of fantastic freaks called superstition. "Never walk under a ladder!"—well, not if there is danger of a bucket of white lead plopping on your head. "Break a mirror and you will have seven years hard luck!" Break a mirror and you break your back picking up the pieces, that's all. "Don't let a black cat cross your path!" No—and if one should, just whirl around and hurry right home! "Carry a rabbit's foot for good luck." But it wasn't such good luck for the rabbit—who once owned four of them—was it? "Don't light three on a match!" I wonder what brilliant young match-company executive dreamed up that one to step up sales.

Of course we, in our superior fashion, smile at these silly practises. Or do we? Perhaps if they bob up on the sea of conversation, we take pot-shots at them as mockingly as anyone else. They are perfectly ridiculous, they are echoes from the jungle, they are shadows from the dark ages, they are as phony as witch-doctors and as pathetic as a charm bracelet rattling with human teeth.

So in conversation, in theory—we scorn them. But how about when it comes to acting ourselves? I remember I could always get room thirteen on the boat. I remember the hard-boiled hospital superintendent who said with a kind of twisted smile, "People are funny, Father. But they never will ad-

mit it." Is that the way it is—we pooh-pooh all superstition in public, but when it comes to our own private life, we secretly shelter a lurking fear that there may be something in it . . . after all we might as well play safe—there's nothing to lose and you never can tell—in other words, plain words, when we are alone and superstition shakes its Halloween mask, we play the coward.

In such an offence, it is true that Conscience in its role of District Attorney would not attempt to indict you for serious sin. But it is just as true that you are dethroning your God-given mature common sense and for the moment placing on the dunce-stool of your mind a childish folly unworthy of a thinking man. And sin is not completely out of the picture, either. As a matter of fact superstition is wrong, precisely because it pushes God out of the picture and presumes to take His place. For doesn't its frightening voice whisper that this four-leaf green clover, this scared and scurrying black cat, this amputated white rabbit's foot, this shattered mirror—will actually influence your future? By some mysterious power within it, it will brighten or darken events to come, for good or for ill. But the only Hand that throws the switch of the future is God. Only the one All-knowing and Almighty God; nobody or nothing else. Because if anything else could,

it would be independent of God, above God, greater than God. It would be God. We talk so freely and so glibly of our luck, of good luck and of bad luck. There is **no** luck. Whatever happens, happens only because God wants it to happen or because God (having given free will) at least permits it to happen. And no insignificant creature can trip the straight and lordly strides of the Creator.

So the sin of superstition is that it gives to some ridiculous object the power that belongs only to God. "I am the Lord Thy God. Thou shalt not have strange gods before Me!"

In olden times the Jews bowed down before a golden calf. Nowadays millions of Americans press their foreheads to the dust before a similar idol: astrology, fortune telling, and the like. And if you do not think this is a golden idol, just reflect that the annual take is over one hundred million dollars! So much does the great and gullible American public, whose godfather was Barnum, hand over each year to the multitude of mysterious prophets for profit who learnedly read palms, cards, stars, crystal-balls, tea-leaves,—almost anything for anything from a half-dollar up. To these practitioners it is an abstruse science; to the ordinary envious by-stander this is too modest; it also must be a fine art to separate so much money from so many people. And it seems to be

growing. Along with the comics and cross-word puzzle and the obituaries and the stock-market, many papers are running a regular column for those who pin their hopes on horoscopes.

Tell your fortune! It seems just as logical to predict a man's future from the egg-stains on his vest as from the tea leaves in his cup. In both cases part of him goes to the cleaners anyway. And haven't you often wondered why these people who have a private knot-hole into the future do not use their top-secret and advance information to invest in a few good stocks on the market, or a few good steeds on the track, and so accumulate a fortune instead of telling it?

It should be comforting to know that acts of superstition are practically always saved from being grave sins by the unflattering fact that we do not think. We do not realize what we are doing. This is handy because some superstitions have their roots even in religion. Like that one of thirteen at the table or Friday the thirteenth. Or knocking wood. In medieval Europe the peasant on his way to the fields might bow his head in prayer before some wayside cross. Then he would reverently touch the carved wooden figure and make the sign of the cross on himself. But suppose that day while in the fields some sudden danger threatened him, maybe a wild animal, maybe a crackling light-

ning storm. He was far from his roadside crucifix so he reached out and touched the nearest object of wood, crossed himself, and said his prayer again. Now, centuries later and without knowing why, his descendants are solemnly knocking on wood to fend off disaster. They might just as well scratch their heads; in fact it might amount to the same thing.

Then there is the chain prayer. Not long ago I found one in the last pew of our church, a greasy typewritten page containing some sort of prayer and the dire warning that you must say this prayer eleven times for eleven days before eleven a. m., otherwise eleven terrible misfortunes would befall you—topple on your helpless head, I suppose, like eleven coconuts out of a tree. Give a moron a typewriter and he will compose a chain prayer. People who circulate chain prayers almost deserve to be sentenced to chain gangs. By deliberately breaking a chain prayer and becoming a missing link, you prove that you are not a duplicating monkey but an independent man.

Then St. Alphonsus tells us of bandits he encountered who would light their votive lamps at a Shrine of Our Lady and pray devoutly that she would send rich travellers into their hands. We would never do that.

But some of us can be as inconsistent. There are nominal Catholics who devoutly wear Our Lady's scapular medal over a heart scabby with sins, brazenly pretending that as long as they hold on to the medal, they can also hold on to the sins, and somehow Our Lady will sneak them in through the service entrance of Heaven. Aren't they afraid they may end up in the incinerator?

And what about those Catholics who put the Sacramentals above the Sacraments, who would never dream of going without a smudge of Ashes on Ash Wednesday, or a sprig of Palm on Palm Sunday, or a blessing of the throat on St. Blaise's Day, or a St. Christopher Medal in their car, and at the same time go on missing Mass, missing Easter Duty — this is **religion**? This is a superstition clumsily wearing the **mask** of religion!

Religion is like a mountain whose head is crowned with snow but whose heart burns with volcanic fires. There must be reason in the head of man before there can be true ardor and fervor in his heart. Superstition is unworthy of man and insulting to God. Serve God because He is great. Serve Him joyfully because He is good. Serve Him only because He alone is God!

God bless you!



## A PERPLEXED PATRON

Address Delivered on February 14, 1954

Maybe your experience is different, but I have never seen a statue raised to this particular saint, nor even a tiny medal struck in his honor. To this day down the highway of history he comes with the cloak of mystery held high before his face. He is so obscure a saint that on the calendar of the Church he rates the very simplest rank of feast that she can give. His background is so vague that about the only things we know about him are that he lived in the third century, died in a pool of blood, a martyr, and was buried outside Rome. The mystery is that in our own twentieth century when the memory of far more prominent saints has withered brown with the passing years, the memory of this undistinguished man keeps strangely green. But I doubt he would be flattered if he knew why—or how.

If you, by a clap of your hands, could resurrect him this very day (because the fourteenth of February is his feast-day) and transport him by stratonliner across the sea to any city in America, you would have on your hands a very bewildered saint. As he trails his long white Roman robe past the candy-store windows with their large red hearts of shining pasteboard, and the drug-store windows with their little red

greeting cards edged with paper-lace, and the flaring red signs everywhere: "Don't Forget St. Valentine's Day!" "Won't You Be My Valentine?"—your poor, perplexed saint, the original Valentine, might shake his holy head and wonder if they had not confused Valentine with Valentino.

You understand there is nothing wrong with mailing Valentine cards or giving Valentine candy. What is wrong is that they should be called Valentine cards or candy in the first place. You can slog up and down the dreary columns of encyclopediae and you come away with not one simple, solid reason why St. Valentine should be associated with romance at all. Oh, some allege that in warmer climes it is around his feast-day that the birds begin to mate. This is about as logical as the case of poor St. Philip on a certain semi-tropical island. Here, many years ago, they had a tremendous hurricane on the feast of St. Philip. To this day they always refer to it as St. Philip's hurricane. He takes the rap. With even less reason St. Valentine has somehow become part of the legend of love, and takes his place with June and moon, balconies and serenades, covered bridges and diamond rings, as one of the standard

props on the stage of the sighing heart.

If it were a pure, continent Christian love, it would still be a mistake. But by and large the love they want St. Valentine to endorse, almost like a testimonial in a commercial, is love gone pagan. Better if they called it not St. Valentine's Day, but Cupid's Day and Cupid's candy and Cupid's greeting cards after the fleshy little god whose only principle is pleasure. "Won't you be my Valentine?" This *should* mean won't you be my fine noble Christian Saint? There are many who would think twice before they asked for that. "Won't you be my Christian martyr?" But a martyr is one who stands for conscience and right. Many would prefer someone who would not be quite so stubborn and stuffy about conscience in circumstances that call for a soft and passionate surrender.

Look again at that heart-shaped box of candy in the window. It is red, and red is traditionally the color of love. But this is not the true deep red of lasting loyalty. This is the bold flaming red of hot passion. The box too is shaped like a heart, and the heart is traditionally the emblem of love. But this is a hollow heart, crammed only with creams and caramels which, like the stolen sweets of lust, are soon consumed and leave the heart empty indeed. It is no longer a "Sweetheart." The box too at

first glance seems to be bound firmly (as true love should be) because there it is tied with a ribbon and a big bow. But look a moment, and it turns out that the big bow is only a fluffy ornament on top and doesn't bind the box at all. In just the same way it is only a light fancy that joins pagan love together, and when that goes, they fall apart like an empty box of candy.

If I were a Communist and wanted to ruin our country, I would advocate light and loose love on every side. Isn't that one more reason the Communists have for hating the Catholic Church? We do not claim that the Catholic Church is the last sanctuary of pure womanhood, or high morals, but do you know of any other voice raised more strongly and more steadily in support of chaste courtship and permanent marriage? All decent people should be alarmed at the pagan standards that youth is sopping up on every side—from the trashy paper-back books in the corner drug-store to the learned lecture halls in some universities. Listen. The Professor of Biology is pontificating: "You girls may wear a coat made from the fur of one animal, a hat made with the feathers of another, and shoes from the hide of a third. But don't forget: you yourself inside make the fourth animal. You *are* an animal, so why fight it?" I wonder if the Professor pauses to ponder that the dif-

ference between the man and the monkey is still the monkey-wrench? The class files into another room. And the Professor of Psychology is droning on: "Free will? Nonsense! Stimuli and reflexes, nerves and responses — you are only a bundle of instincts. Free will is a high, flattering idea but it just doesn't stand up." (I wonder what would happen if you stole the professor's wallet on the way out and maintained you couldn't help it — you had to do it — a compulsion; after all you had no free will). But the bell rings, and in a little while the class settles itself before the Professor of Sociology: "Of course when you decide to choose a mate you will have to get a marriage license to comply with the law, but as students of human society you should know that marriage is an outworn tribal custom edging toward extinction. Soon it will go the way of the cave and the stone hatchet."

Then some of these very teachers who may be old and cold and academic and theoretic, these professors profess to be shocked when the young people carry their liberal lectures out of the classroom into life, into the park or the parked car. Well, what do you think is going to happen if you break up the old decencies like dry wood and toss them on the impetuous fires of flaming youth?

Furthermore, this gospel of pagan love, where pleasure is

enthroned and conscience is entombed, this devil's gospel is preached from other pulpits than university desks. Is it too much to say that the "modern" attitude toward love stands somewhere between a wink and a whistle? Take the gospel of love according to St. Cinema, and recall how frequently in the movies marriage is a flip-pant, frivolous affair played for laughs. Or, if they are young it is a sudden adolescent thrill; and if they are older it is a sophisticated interlude, with at least one of them wearing the degree "D.G." meaning Divorce Granted, or possibly Damaged Goods . . . but how often on the screen do you see marriage emphasized as a final, life-long contract, not to speak of a sacred Sacrament?

Take the newspapers and love, and you know as well as I do that a chorus girl's scandal will be smeared over page one while the golden wedding of some sterling citizen is lucky if it gets ten lines near the obituaries. Take love and contemporary fiction. They tell me that today's authors, these drug-store Dickens', think nothing of sending the heroine off on a week-end with one arm around the "hero" and the other snapping its fingers at stodgy, long-haired convention. Take love and Tin Pan Alley. Listen to some of these modern songs and you wonder if they didn't take both morals and music from the felines on the back-

yard fence . . . a long piercing wail of desire. Would you ever suspect from all this that love could be sweet and wholesome and possibly shy and certainly clean and good?

Oh it is a soft, sticky, sickening goo that the world will slap on your mind if you go to it for standards of conduct! But in so delicate a field, in so sacred a human relationship, *should* we go for our standards to the films of Hollywood, or the scandals of the newspapers, or the divorce courts of Reno, or the beauty contests of Atlantic City, or the brassy songs of Broadway — or to the Commandments of God and the glorious ideals of Christ?

Certainly it is natural for a man to love a maid, but certainly it is not natural—not the nature of man—that his love be no higher than the beasts! Human love is — human, and therefore it must be guided by reason, subject to conscience, worthy of creatures who are also the children of God. Is all this “theology” and is “theology” a high, vague, wispy cloud? Well even a teen-ager can see the difference between boy and girl driving in the park — which can be wholesome fun; and parking in the drive — which can be moral pus.

Pontius Pilate sent Christ to crucifixion by washing his hands. Youth can do the same thing today by dirtying its hands. Doesn't St. Paul talk about the re-crucifying of

Christ by Christians? Oh, the phoney philosophy of the world will guarantee to dye your conscience a white gold the way the beauty parlors do hair. It is a synthetic rinse, alibis like: “Well, *that is my weakness*” or “If you love somebody, what can you do?” or “God will understand.” Aren't they ever afraid He will understand that they broke His laws like peanut-shells, or put His commandments out of the way like a floor-lamp that got in the way at a party?

Certainly at times it is hard to be pure. But do you know of anything in life really worthwhile that isn't hard? Perhaps that is just why Our Blessed Lord on the cross allowed a soldier to open His side so that we might see the great red valentine of His own crimson bleeding Heart, a Heart not pierced by a tiny Cupid's arrow but with a long cruel spear; a Heart not fringed with dainty paper-lace, but circled, as St. Margaret Mary saw it in a vision, with a wreath of sharp thorns. He wanted to remind us that if we want to keep our hearts clean and good they too must be surrounded by the thorns of hard things — the thorns of self-respect and self-restraint; the thorns of decency and modesty; the thorns of will-power and (what is more important) won't power!

After all, Valentine means “Strong!”

God bless you!

## KEEP THE DOOR OPEN

Address Delivered on February 21, 1954

If a man has huge feet and wears a pair of shoes that look like landing-barges, it is a phenomenal salesman who will interest him in a pair of shoes, size six and a half A, though they be the finest footwear in the world. Sermons, in one sense, are like shoes. I mean the sermon that fits one group of people neatly and nicely is of absolutely no concern to another group. Why for instance should the girls who are praying fiercely, "Dear St. Anne, get me a man—as quick as you can!" want to be bothered with a thundered warning on the evils of divorce? And why should "the perils of drunkenness" draw anything but a drowsy yawn from the teetotalers who, when they say tea, mean tea. This is what a preacher is up against when it comes to choosing a subject, and he desperately knows it. Sometimes you figure that the Devil would be the only perfect audience because you could presume he was involved in everything. But then you remember (for one exception) the Devil isn't married . . . though there are some wives who are sure he is.

The answer is probably the elementary distinction between experience and knowledge. There are many themes which

may not here and now concern us personally, but about which we should be intelligently informed—know the sound principles of the matter—so that if the situation ever does ring our own personal door-bell, or even if it shyly seeks our advice, we shall know the position to take or the course to counsel.

Anyway today's little talk is about a certain type of letter which is coming in more and more frequently. The words are always heart-broken, the pages often tear-stained, the writer is usually a Catholic mother and the subject a straying daughter. Sometimes the paragraphs are typed and sometimes scribbled but the mother is generally weeping over her child's bad marriage. "Here I thought I was doing everything I could, to rear her a good Catholic, and now she has run off and married outside the church. For twenty years I tried to do my best, but I guess my best just wasn't enough."

Thousands of mothers have groaned that bitter self-reproach, but it is undeserved, for how could anyone in his senses hold such a mother responsible for such a daughter? Way back in the Scriptures, centuries before the coming of

Christ, poor, patient Job winced with that same sick futile feeling. It is the bleak disappointment of having been let down in the two tenderest areas of the heart, parenthood and religion. Job packed his reaction into one crushed sentence: "No man can lead another unto God."

And it is true. If anyone really wants to run away from God, there are no ropes that will hold him, not even heart-strings. But how often have I seen it, that eventually the straying sinner is quietly caught and gently drawn back in the loop of a Mother's well-fingered rosary. And this often happens, even after the Mother is dead! Out of her very grave her prayers bloom and bear their fruit!

But what about the particular present case where the Catholic daughter sets her pretty mouth into a grim red line and marries outside the Church? We say she "marries" outside the Church. The sad cold fact is that she has gone through a marriage ceremony, but in the eyes of God's Church, and therefore in the eyes of God, she is not married at all. This may strike some people as high-handed ecclesiastical arrogance, but suppose you look at it this way. Matrimony is a Sacrament; and the laws for validly receiving the Sacraments lie with the Church. The same Christ who gave us the Sacraments, also gave us the Church to administer them.

And one law for the Sacrament of Matrimony is that a Catholic must be married in the presence of a priest and two witnesses. For that reason a Catholic can no more go to City Hall to be married than he can go to City Hall to be baptized. He can no more be married by a minister than he can be confirmed or anointed by a minister. If these attitudes seem to be bits of stony arrogance, they are but chips off the central Rock, the doctrine that Our Blessed Lord founded only one true Church, and this is her teaching. In geology all rocks may be equal; in theology we believe there is only one: Peter, the Rock upon which Christ founded His Church.

Notice though that the Church does not go tinkling its bell and flourishing its book into the domain of the state or into the conscience of the non-Catholic. Since marriage besides being a spiritual Sacrament is also a civil contract, certainly the State has the right to make laws for that contract like licenses, blood-tests and all the rest. And since the Catholic Church does not make marriage laws for non-Catholics, she respects as valid any marriage of non-Catholics properly contracted whether performed by a minister or any lawful official.

The marriage the Church does not recognize as valid, is the marriage entered into by a *Catholic* without the necessary priest and two witnesses. Such

a Catholic would not be meeting a serious requirement for the valid reception of a Sacrament, the Sacrament of Matrimony. Need I add that if Catholic parents attend such a marriage of their child, that is, one performed by a public official or a minister, these parents are cooperating in something which, according to the Church, is gravely sinful. But, you tell me, the ceremony has long since been performed. They (let us say the Catholic girl and the non-Catholic man) are living together as man and wife. What should be done about it, what attitude taken? *This* is what the Catholic parents want to know . . . they and, their sisters and their brothers and their cousins and their aunts.

Well, if I were in your place I should try to be kinder than kind. I should try to remember that after all the sin was not committed against *me* but against God, so what right have I to explode like a volcano? True, your heart may be a dark cave of disappointment, but if you come running out of it waving a club you may drive your daughter away from God forever. Nobody can approve what is wrong, but a brutal, blistering condemnation of wrong isn't always the best invitation to return to right. Use the blow-torch on a human soul, and instead of burning off the stain, you may just harden it, fix it in deeper.

So to the parents of such a

daughter manacled to a bad marriage I would say: Pity her, pray for her, be kind to her, visit her. Yes, visit her! It is true you cannot approve her situation, but if you act gently and sympathetically (not like someone proudly determined to win an argument but like someone humbly hoping to save a soul) you may be able to persuade her to have the marriage rectified. You would be surprised how often this can be done—and done with no conspicuous church ceremony—as long as neither the girl nor the man is entangled in any previous marriage.

The curling whip of angry words will lash a person, but when you draw it back, the whip returns to you empty and the person is still away. Kindness is the only thin string you have to bring someone back. Violence breaks all ties, even family ties. Don't try to nag her back into the Church or drag her back into the Church. Just build the path by little acts of kindness and more kindness, and prayers and more prayers, and then perhaps at the right mellow moment a simple word of loving suggestion from your heart may work wonders!

After all I cannot believe that a Catholic girl married outside the Catholic Church walks down any rose-paths of happiness while she is out of the Church. I hold that no matter how luxuriously she seems to live on the outside, she is hav-

ing a hard time on the inside, and if she doesn't come back, it isn't because she is happy in her exile, but only stubborn. One corner of her heart must always be in secret agony. She may of course even scream that she is perfectly contented, but when her loud protest dies down, there is her conscience still ringing like an insistent burglar alarm. Why not? You cannot be a Catholic all your living days, and know it is the only True Faith, and attend its Mass, and receive its Sacraments and say its beads—and then suddenly toss the whole thing into an ash barrel like an old Christmas tree. The Faith is a tree whose roots are sunk deep in any Catholic heart, and they don't come out easily. As a matter of fact I don't think they ever come out at all. I have talked with more than a few Catholic girls who had snapped their fingers in the face of God and went through the motions of a marriage outside the Church, but who years later quietly slipped through the side-door of the Church and came back. And when they do, when their bad marriage is reset like a broken leg, and blessed by the Church, the first thing they blurt out is that all this time, despite the love and pleasure and everything else, they were never really happy. Because you cannot slip happiness on like a necklace or imprint it like a kiss or wear it like a bridal gown. Happiness must

come from within. It starts inside. But if inside, deep down in the heart there is the gnawing knowledge that you have defied God in a serious matter, if over the soul hangs the black shadow of mortal sin, how can there ever be genuine joy?

Turn on all the gay lights of pleasure, beat all the drums of distraction—guilt is still coiled down there like a snake in the shadows. This sense that all is not right goes with the girl on her very honeymoon; and when she is alone, the smile dies and she stares into space. Later this sad sense of living in sin, this longing for something missing that she desperately wants, taps her on the shoulder at the strangest places. She may suddenly feel it as she sees the crowds hurrying to Midnight Mass at Christmas, or as she looks down into the casket of a close friend killed in an accident, or even as she comes upon the pictures in the newspaper of a wedding in her old church . . . the uneasiness is always there, like a dull steady tooth-ache in her conscience, a sharp sword in her deepest soul.

Even now as I speak to you someone out there may be churning with the temptation to marry a man outside the Church . . . possibly because he is divorced and you cannot marry him in the Church. Well, he may be rich, and he may be handsome, and he may be able to give you everything—everything but happiness. How can



you be happy when you will be telling the Almighty (not in words but in deed) that some human being means more to you than your God or your Faith? Doesn't it seem that St. Paul almost had just such a young girl in mind when he wrote to the Galatians: "I am astounded that you are so quick to be a deserter! Who is it that has fascinated you, cast a spell over you that you refuse obedience to the true Gospel? Are you out of your senses that having begun spiritually you are now wholly taken up with the flesh?"

That was the letter St. Paul wrote, but the girl who is going to marry outside the Church should leave a letter like this: "Dear Mom and Dad . . . I'm go-

ing to marry him at any cost. I don't care whether your hearts are broken. I don't care if I am a disgrace to my Catholic education. I don't care if I'm leaving the Church and the Sacraments. I don't care whether my soul is damned. I don't care if I'm responsible for my children being lost to the faith, or their children. I care for nothing but myself, my will, my pleasure, my happiness."

There is an answer to that letter. It is: nobody leaves God and finds happiness. And if you have lost it, a tortured heart yearning for the Communion Rail, the only way to find it is to come back to Him, the God of mercy and of love.

God bless you!

## OUTSTRETCHED HANDS

Address Delivered on February 28, 1954

If Heaven had a Complaint Department, perhaps the busiest window would be "*Unanswered Prayers*." At least I think that the question people put most often to priests is: "Why aren't my prayers heard?" And the priest who in his time has perhaps preached with rich and rolling eloquence on "Ask and ye shall receive" almost feels that now he is supposed to find God an "out." As though "Ask and ye shall receive" were a handsomely illuminated script or document like a contract or a deed or an insurance policy, and he smugly points to the fine print underneath and suavely explains, "I'm afraid you overlooked *this*" or "Your particular case is definitely excluded *here*." There is no such trickery in the Trinity. God needs no defense, because He is God, and that means all-good.

True, this would be easier to see if the answer to every prayer came out as promptly and precisely as a piece of pie at the automat — or like that rather recent incident in London. A young Catholic lawyer (bit of a barrister, y' know) had his shingle hanging out but no clients hurrying in. He was depressed almost to desperation. Then he got an idea. He left

his office and went down to a little chapel at Moorfield and prayed fervently, almost fiercely, before the picture of Saint Thomas More, who in his day had been the most brilliant lawyer in the realm, in fact the Lord High Chancellor. When the young lawyer got back to his chambers, there was a note scribbled on the telephone pad by the man in the next office. A client would be in at eleven. The client turned out to be a very important person and was so pleased with the young lawyer's work that he introduced him to several prominent friends and started him on a very promising legal career. By one of those eyebrow-raising, "let me get that again" coincidences, the client's name was Mr. Thomas More.

Oh, if prayers were always answered as dramatically as that, or even if they were dramatically left unanswered and we could see why . . . For example, if you prayed to catch a certain train (and you missed it) or if you prayed to make a certain plane (and had to hitch-hike forty miles on a winter road, as happened to me, and missed it by one minute)—if then the next morning you read in the paper how the train was wrecked or the plane had

crashed . . . then we could see why our prayer was not answered, and be grateful! But as a rule, the mountain peak of God's design and providence is not so sharply clear. Often it is hidden in the clouds, dark swirling mists through which human eyes cannot peer.

But way back fifteen centuries ago, one of the dazzling luminaries of theology, Saint Augustine, dropped some realistic pointed hints why some of our prayers are not heard. The way he phrased it, it has almost the ring of a college yell: "Mali mala male petimus." In a kind free-wheeling translation, that would mean that some of us ask for wrong things, some in a wrong way, and some while kneeling on the very ground of wrong-doing.

The wrong things?

Now, nobody in his right mind would brazenly pray for what is downright sinful. But often our faith is so thin we just annoy God asking for trifles, the small change of temporal things, hardly ever asking the great gold of grace and salvation itself. We pray "Deliver us from all evil." But don't you know that in the eyes of God there is on this whole earth only one real evil—and it is not poverty, it is not pain, it is not disappointment. It is sin. Because only sin can clang against us the gates of Heaven and keep us from God forever.

How ironic against that, is the prayer of a woman amply

dressed in a flowery chintz like a slipcover and upholstered herself like a sofa, who now at breakfast between her fourth and fifth jelly - doughnut, breathes (with a little difficulty) a petulant prayer to God to take off a few pounds from her tonnage. Or a high-school boy blowing the thick dust off his chemistry book, and saying a panicky prayer that somehow the Lord will see him through tomorrow's exam with flying colors and bubbling test-tubes!

It is perfectly proper to pray for God's help in our particular need, but it is good to remember that God is not a traffic cop who suddenly holds up his hand in the middle of the street-corner and stops all the normal course of things, holding back, you may say, the laws of nature while our petition goes screaming through with motorcycle escort! Our prayer should be not so much for exceptions or exemptions to the general rule, but rather strength to bear the order of things as God has established them.

I remember once in the springtime seeing a sobbing mother kneeling on the green cushion of a grave, her hands clasped upon the tombstone as though it was a pew in church. She prayed there like that, she told me later, till she had buried the black devil of bitterness that had darkened her heart ever since her boy had been plucked away in the bright

bloom of his youth. Before this she had tried everything to forget—tried taking a trip, tried plunging into her work, tried listening to the sympathy and the counsel of her friends. But until she got down on her knees and turned to God in prayer—really prayed—nothing helped. But prayer had flung up the gloomy blinds of grief and let in the golden sunlight of God's own comfort.

As to asking the wrong way—I suppose the father of a family never lived who did not at one time or other grumble that the only time his children recognized his existence was when they wanted something. "Dad, may I have the car tonight?" When the "bite" is on and the hand is out, then Dad suddenly assumes in the family a stature of importance. But wouldn't this make any normal sensitive Dad glumly wonder if he were really the father of a family, or just the disbursing agent of a little corporation? Well, how do you think Our Father in Heaven feels if the only language we ever speak to Him is the prayer of "Gimme" or "Please"? If we didn't need something, would we ever notice Him?

It must be far from flattering to the too-tolerant Almighty. Honestly, I think some people must really picture God as a sort of super-clerk in glistening white, behind a long, long soda fountain with all kinds of chrome levers and porcelain

taps. This one is marked *Jobs*; that one, *Boy Friend*; the next one *Health*; then *Exams*—and so on. And as soon as our order comes in, He is supposed to spurt that particular syrup into the glass and hand it over—quick. And if He doesn't do it immediately, we get a little impatient in our prayers, a little irritated, and there is a kind of pious pounding on the marble counter—"What's holding things up, anyway?" Look: we cannot turn the Deity into a delivery boy—but oh, how some of us try!

As regards asking against a background of wrong-doing, tonight in more than one home across America, some boy will put out his hand across the table and whine, "Mom, kin I have some more?"—more anything from an ear of corn to a piece of cake. And when the mother sees that hand stretched out, grimy, smudgy, just plain dirty, she will glare, "Willie, where *did* you get those hands? How dare you come to the table like that. Now leave at once and don't ask for one more thing until you have washed!" How many of us larger people are in a larger sense stretching out toward God dirty hands, hands filthy with sin, and asking Him to fill them with some favor? Should we not first clean up before we dare speak up?

Ponder the parable of the second-story man who has just

smashed a window and ransacked a home. Now he is climbing down the ladder. Suddenly a rung snaps, and he plunges to the ground, breaking a leg. All at once there is the owner of the house looking down from an upper window . . . so what does the culprit do? He calls up, "Mr. Owner, first of all I want you to get me the best doctor in town, I'd also appreciate a little help with my hospital bills. And by the way, I could stand a new ladder." You think this is a fantastic, grotesque exaggeration—but think again: haven't we all done something like that to the Man Upstairs—shattered not God's windows but His commandments, invaded His Dominion, robbed Him of His due honor, torn virtue apart—by our sins and more sins? Are we in any position to ask *anything* except Mercy? And if we do ask for anything else, should it not be with deepest humility and broken-hearted sorrow?

We think that what we ask is for our good, but the road of life takes some strange curves. Remember the ten lepers in the Gospel? Here they were with their blotched and horrible masks of faces, following Our Lord, hoarsely pleading to be healed. So He heard their prayer. But the very moment their leprous fingers, numb and dead as twigs on a tree, began to feel the ruddy vibrant pulse of health, they all—all but one—forgot the Christ that cured

them. Ten lepers *sick*, sought out the Lord, clung to Him, prayed to Him. Ten lepers *cured*—nine of them never even went back to say "Thanks!" Perhaps instead they took the first muddy path *back to sin*. Isn't it better to crawl into Heaven, even as a leper?

God the Father was looking not at the individual request, but at the over-all picture. Isn't that what every good father does? Isn't there many a boy going to bed tonight with an upset stomach because some short-sighted, indulgent father (or mother) gave the child all the chocolates he wanted—in other words, gave him just what he asked for? Our Father in Heaven is too wise and too loving ever to do that with us, his children. The wisdom we lack, He has. Where we are blind, He sees. But a little poem, whose author I cannot find, mirrors that thought clear as a Holy Water font:

I know not by what methods  
rare—

But this I know: God answers  
prayer!

I know that He has given  
His word

Which tells us prayer is always  
heard

And will be answered, soon  
or late . . .

And so I pray, and calmly wait.  
I know not if the blessing  
sought

Will come in just the way I  
thought;  
I leave my prayer with Him  
alone  
Whose Will is wiser than  
my own,

Assured that He will grant  
my quest,  
Or send some answer far  
more blest!  
God bless you!

## THE PURPOSE OF THE CATHOLIC HOUR

(Extract from the address of the late Patrick Cardinal Hayes at the inaugural program of the Catholic Hour in the studio of the National Broadcasting Company, New York City, March 2, 1930.)

Our congratulations and our gratitude are extended to the National Council of Catholic Men and its officials, and to all who, by their financial support, have made it possible to use this offer of the National Broadcasting Company. The heavy expense of managing and financing a weekly program, its musical numbers, its speakers, the subsequent answering of inquiries, must be met . . .

This radio hour is for all the people of the United States. To our fellow-citizens, in this word of dedication, we wish to express a cordial greeting and, indeed, congratulations. For this radio hour is one of service to America, which certainly will listen in interestedly, and even sympathetically, I am sure, to the voice of the ancient Church with its historic background of all the centuries of the Christian era, and with its own notable contribution to the discovery, exploration, foundation and growth of our glorious country . . .

Thus to voice before a vast public the Catholic Church is no light task. Our prayers will be with those who have that task in hand. We feel certain that it will have both the good will and the good wishes of the great majority of our countrymen. Surely, there is no true lover of our Country who does not eagerly hope for a less worldly, a less material, and a more spiritual standard among our people.

With good will, with kindness and with Christ-like sympathy for all, this work is inaugurated. So may it continue. So may it be fulfilled. This word of dedication voices, therefore, the hope that this radio hour may serve to make known, to explain with the charity of Christ, our faith, which we love even as we love Christ Himself. May it serve to make better understood that faith as it really is—a light revealing the pathway to heaven; a strength, and a power divine through Christ; pardoning our sins, elevating, consecrating our common every-day duties and joys, bringing not only justice but gladness and peace to our searching and questioning hearts.

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