

THE CATHOLIC HOUR

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JUSTICE IS STRENGTH

BY

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My friends, the series of talks which is about to begin centers about five virtues which the world today needs. If we are to keep the peace which we are winning so gloriously, we must be prepared in heart for the task. The world of tomorrow will demand great deeds from each of us. It will call for the calm heroism of godly living, for the dedication of our lives to the service of our fellow man, that God's Name may be honored upon earth, as it is in heaven. In these days to come it will not be enough to pass wise laws, even though we rightly pray that the Spirit of Wisdom may descend upon our rulers. Nor will man be saved by the plans of economist and the treaties of statesmen, though it would be folly to discard these helps. These are but the externals of a great nation. They are necessary. At times they are indispensable. But real greatness lies in the heart of man. A nation with a soul will find wise and learned men to guide it. But a people without a soul could possess the cleverness of a Solomon and the strength of a Samson, and still be an evil force, a menace to the peace of the world. Our Savior warned us against whited sepulchres, possessed of a cold beauty which conceals death and corruption. Today we may rightly rejoice

in our strength. But naked strength can be abused. A powerful motor car can serve its owner well, but it can also rush in the ways of death and destruction. It is for us to decide upon the use of our power. May God in His mercy guide us in this decision.

There are two virtues which should be the pillars of society, justice and charity. With these as our support, a noble structure can be built. Without them, we build upon shifting sands. In our talk today we are to consider justice in our dealings with our fellow man. Next Sunday we shall deal with justice in relation to our own selves, which is but another name for the forgotten virtue of humanity, or love of neighbor, and then of that higher charity which men call patriotism. Finally we shall dwell upon the highest degree of both justice and charity, and this is worship, man's duty to his Maker.

Justice is the rendering to every man of that which is due to him. It is the granting of rights and the acknowledgment of duty. It is that even-handed equity which sets man apart from the animal, who knows only the laws of force and violence. Without bias and without prejudice, it deals fairly with the

lowly and with the great. Riches cannot corrupt it, nor can power prevail over it. Without it, government is tyranny. With it, the strong can live with the weak; the friendless, with those blessed with influence and prestige. Justice makes man noble, indeed, unless a man is just, he is hardly a man.

All this we gladly admit. Few of us there are who would not pay tribute to this great virtue. Yet in practice, we do not always live up to our profession. It is not that we are consciously unjust. We do not steal or cheat or lie. The thought of defrauding our neighbor would shock us. We pay our bills, and even pride ourselves that on a certain occasion we corrected a merchant when we received more change than was our due. Yet in spite of this, there are certain broader demands of justice which we overlook. But it is these precise demands which the modern world most needs, if it is to survive.

The first quality of justice needed today is a sense of duty. In our nation many of us are more sensitive about our rights than about our duties. We are more conscious of the attractions of pleasure than of the stern insistence of obligation. Even in a time of great national crisis we find it necessary to offer inducements and sugarcoating for sacrifices which should be taken as a matter of course. We use

salesmanship and promotion schemes, when it should be enough to say: Your country needs it. In the midst of a war for the survival of civilization, an appeal to self-interest should be unthinkable. Yet the headlines of recent months reveal our shame in this matter. For example, if anything should appeal to our sense of justice, it should be the idea of rationing. It is obvious that in a war like this there are bound to be shortages. So much of our manpower and machine power have been drafted for war that even a great industrial nation can hardly expect to keep its standards of living intact. We cannot be both an arsenal for the world and a nation living in ease and luxury. We realize that we are supplying allies whose factories have been bombed, whose farm lands have been turned into airfields or battlefields. We know that gasoline for a mechanized war will spare the lives of our sons and brothers in the armed services, disabling the enemy without enormous sacrifice of human life.

All these things are clear to everyone. No one denies that shortages exist and that most of them are inevitable. Most Americans, thank God, accept them cheerfully and honestly. Yet there is another side to the picture which cannot truthfully be overlooked. Our newspapers were filled with

cynical pictures of crowded highways when the pleasure-driving ban was made a matter of honor rather than police regulation. Pressure groups were formed to demand our rights to recreation as usual. Black markets flourished and soon spread to the even more essential field of our basic foods. It was considered clever to carp at regulation and to magnify and distort inevitable mistakes in administration. Wild rumors and dangerous jokes spread like fire. Enforcement became necessary, but this was greeted by some as a parallel to Prohibition days or to the Nazi Gestapo. We may well hope that all this was exceptional rather than typical. It is only natural that we hear more of the troublesome few than of the patriotic and law-observing many. It would not be a comforting thought that many of us were like the Romans of the fifth century, who used military funds, not against the barbarian invader, but simply to provide more games and sport for the populace. Fearful indeed would be the day when we lost our sense of duty.

There are deep roots to this disregard for duty. Much of it stems from our system of education. For a while it was fashionable to discard the very notion of discipline in the training of children. Some parents and teachers thought that self-expression was the ideal. Every

trait in a child's personality had to be developed, no matter how much it conflicted with the rights of others. Such training might produce a respectable hermit, but it did not fashion men and women for the duties of social living. Rather it led to a generation which demanded a comfortable religion and an easy life. In the churches, the notion of sin and obligation were to be treated as survivals of outmoded customs. In the home, marriage was not supposed to interfere with the pleasure of husband and wife. Parties and fun were goals to which all else was to be subordinated. Children were not welcome because they demanded too much attention. They were a burden on vacation trips. They were a problem when one wanted to go to the theater. Furthermore, they were a financial drain which kept one from living up to the neighbor's standard of luxury. Such was the attitude towards duty popularized in the novels and motion pictures of the Twenties. Some of it even survived the depression of the Thirties. With some of us, it did not take deep root. The bravery and endurance of our armies, and the great sacrifices of many at home, prove this. But it remains a danger so long as the cynical few seek selfish advantage in this hour of crisis. It is the task of every American to set the example of a

generous spirit of service. The question should be not: What *must* I do; but rather: What *can* I do. No other attitude is safe in time of war. No other attitude is adequate for the equally important, if less dramatic, task of safeguarding the future peace.

But this is not enough. There is a second demand of justice today which is no less stern and exacting. It is the call to integrity and honor and truthfulness in our dealings with others. There is danger in time of war of a relaxing of this standard. Military necessities call for the concealment of many facts. Some go so far as to assert that in the interest of propaganda we must distort the truth. All our enemies must be portrayed as fiends, and all our allies as spotless crusaders. On the home front, wild hysterical appeals must be used to win the support of every one in the war effort. Fortunately such methods are much less common today than they were in 1917. But there is still enough to warrant concern, particularly in view of the problem of peace.

An outstanding example of distortion and injustice is found in the story of our home production front. Here we have not been given a fair picture of the truth. Many persons have the impression that our war production is a hopelessly bungled job. They blame

this upon selfishness on the part of capital and labor, and on military and civil administrative incompetence. Certainly such an impression has been transmitted to many of our soldiers on the fighting lines. The selfishness of the very few is allowed to overshadow the overwhelming devotion of the many. This is a false picture. It is like portraying our glorious victory in Sicily by telling only of the dozen or so stories of individual incompetence and cowardice which I feel sure are bound to occur in such a huge undertaking. The facts are that capital and labor alike have done a magnificent job of war production. Hundreds of thousands are working themselves into a premature grave, giving their lives for their country, just as surely as did the soldier lying on the plains of Guadalcanal. There have been greedy business men; but thousands of others have rendered unselfish service beyond the power of money to buy. Some workers have been foolish enough to strike briefly even in time of war, but millions more have worked seven days a week, month after month, often in a strange city, under unbelievable housing conditions, often traveling hours to their work—likewise a sacrifice which no money can buy. The result of this and the equally splendid achievements of our farmers, has been a

miracle of production far surpassing the results of any other nation.

In two years we did more than the Axis did in ten years of deliberate preparation for war. These are the facts. Our soldiers and the public have a right to know them, and not distorted propaganda produced by some selfish group. Unless we develop a conscience and a sense of justice in this matter, we will soon develop a cynical nation, distrusting all sources of news. We have already gone too far in that direction. One of the reasons why we so long underestimated the menace of Hitlerism was our unwillingness to trust the reporting of the facts. Again, in recent mine strikes, many persons wondered why the miners followed their leaders instead of the press, radio, and newsreels of the nation. The answer is simple. The miners have long felt that their side of the case would not be given a fair hearing by those who supply the news. The result is that they pay no attention to public opinion, which they consider deceived and misinformed. This is a most serious matter. The essence of democracy is free choice by informed voters. When we lose confidence in our ability to get the truth, the next step is to lose confidence in democracy. The right of freedom of speech must be safeguarded by the duty of telling the complete

truth, undistorted and undiluted.

There is another important example of injustice in the matter of truth. We find this in the portrayal of our war aims. Some publicists feel it their duty to hold that each of the United Nations is a great and pure democracy, fighting only for the four freedoms. But we know that this is not of necessity true. Most of us entered the war because we were attacked by that evil beast which we call the Axis. We saw Europe and Asia overrun by looting soldiers, thirsty for world conquest. Then the day came when our interests were attacked, and we fought. This is the primary reason why the United States, the Soviet Union, and many other states are in the war. Over and above this we may accept the ideals of the Atlantic Charter. We may propose a treaty of peace which would embody great principles of wisdom and justice. We hope and trust that this will be the case. But first we must realize that the evil we are fighting *against* is an all sufficient justification of our war, independently of the good we are fighting *for*. If this is understood, then we will not face the disillusionment and cynicism which poisoned our minds after the last War. We hope for a world of the four freedoms; we shall strive to accomplish this; but we shall not feel that the struggle has been vain

if we fail to attain the full ideal of world justice. So long as the world is better without the Axis than it was when tyranny was in flower, we shall have succeeded. We hope to do much more; but should we fail, we shall still believe that our cause was just.

Justice, then, demands a passionate devotion to truth as well as a willingness to share a common

burden. It means absolute integrity in public life as well as in private. Honesty and principle, regardless of consequences, must be the rule. Such has been the traditional spirit of America. It is the real source of our greatness. It is vital that we preserve this heritage in a world which so badly needs the example of great living.

THE CATHOLIC HOUR

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The nationwide Catholic Hour was inaugurated on March 2, 1930, by the National Council of Catholic Men in cooperation with the National Broadcasting Company and its associated stations. Radio facilities are provided gratuitously by NBC and the stations associated with it; the program is arranged and produced by NCCM.

The Catholic Hour was begun on a network of 22 stations, and now carries its message of Catholic truth on each Sunday of the year (and Good Friday) through a number of stations varying from 90 to 107, situated in 40 states, the District of Columbia, and Hawaii. Consisting of an address mainly expository, by one or another of America's leading Catholic preachers, and of sacred music provided usually by a unit of the Paulist Choir, the Catholic Hour has distinguished itself as one of the most popular and extensive religious broadcasts in the world. A current average of 41,000 audience letters a month, about twenty per cent of which come from listeners of other faiths, gives some indication of its popularity and influence.

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