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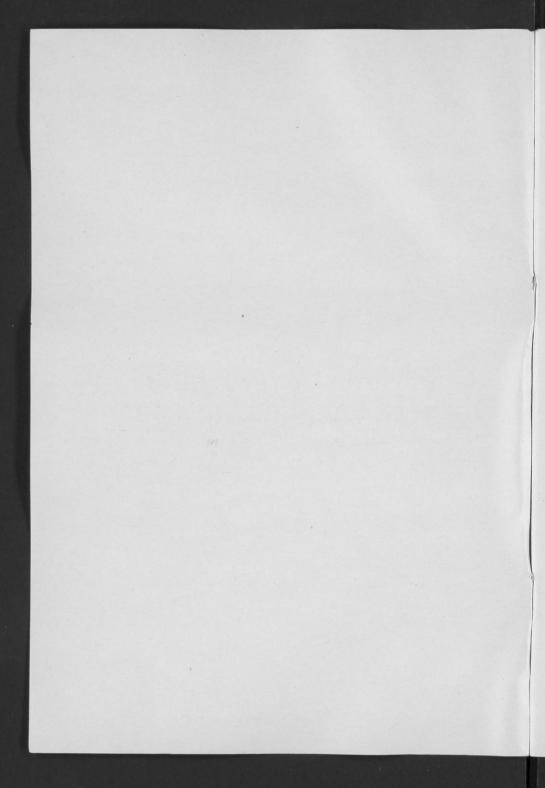
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of saints
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Prince
of Peace

Rev. John J. Dougherty



# "OF SAINTS AND KINGS AND THE PRINCE OF PEACE"



# "Of Saints And Kings And The Prince Of Peace"

Five addresses delivered on the Catholic Hour from November 27, 1949 to December 25, 1949. This program is heard on the National Broadcasting Company network at 6:00-6:30 P.M. E.S.T. and produced by the National Council of Catholic Men.

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# JOHN THE BAPTIST: THE MEANING OF PENANCE

Talk given on November 27, 1949

The opinions of men are often the children of their loves and hates rather then of their minds. There were many opinions of John the Baptist. First there was the reaction of the The crowd's people. opinion about a good and sincere man is often a kind judgment. Sometimes it is even exaggerated in the direction of good. The people were saying of John that he was "the prophet" promised by Moses, or that he was Elias returned from the world beyond where the fiery chariot had borne him. or that he was the Messias the world expected. The Baptist had to control these opinions and when delegates from Jerusalem interrogated him he answered. "I am not Elias. I am not the prophet." With the humility of the great he said, "I am the voice of one crying in the desert: Make straight the path of the Lord" (John 1:23).

Then there was the opinion of the Pharisees. Pharisaic opinion was official opinion, traditional opinion, righteous opinion. John came neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and they said, "He has a devil." When Jesus came eating and drinking they said, "Behold a glutton and a wine-drinker, a friend of publicans and sinners" (Matthew 11:18f). The only way to please a Pharisec was to think like a Pharisee, pray like a Pharisee, be a Pharisee.

Fortunately opinions are finally measured by the moral stature of the man that gives rise to them, and by this standard John had nothing to fear. No mortal man was ever praised so highly by Jesus. John denied that he was a prophet; Jesus said he was more than a prophet. John denied that he was Elias: Jesus affirmed that in him Elias had come. John declared that he was not worthy to loose the strap of the Messias' sandal; Jesus said of him: "... among those born of women there has not risen a greater than John the Baptist." (Matthew 11:11).

What really mattered to John was not what the crowds thought of him, not what the Pharisees thought of him, but what God thought of him. What

Christ thinks of you is what you really are; what He thinks of you is infinitely more important than what you think of yourself. Christians for two thousand years have accepted Christ's estimate of John the Baptist, and this Advent as always His words will ring through cathedral and churches from here to Singapore. You and I will be assured when we hear them and thank God for John the Baptist.

It is interesting how much drama accumulates around the saints: as much, I think, as around sinners. Of course you get the unbeatable accumulation of drama when you have a sinner turned saint. That is why Augustine and Magdalene have such an appeal. To come to the drama in the life of John. First of all. the theater of action is dramatic. I don't think there is any place in the world more dramatic than the Jordan Valley and the desert of Judea where John fasted and prayed in preparation for his mission. The Jordan Valley is the bed of an ancient inland sea. The river is an aching, squirming stream that twists its way through the grey-white desert to the Dead Sea. The

sea lies deep down in the earth and above it tower the wild ranges of Moab and Judea. In this setting John looked dramatic in his loose garment of camel's hair bound with a leathern belt. This garb was characteristic of the prophet of old. John's diet was more than dramatic: locusts and wild honey from the rock crevices.

The burden of John's preaching was penance. The dramatic fact about the Baptist's preaching is this: he puts penance very close to the heart of the Kingdom of God. There is an everlasting note in this cry for penance, for when Jesus came His first message was: "Do penance, for the Kingdom of God is at hand." On the authority of John and of Jesus penance and the kingdom are inseparable. If we desire the kingdom of God on earth as we pray in the Our Father we can hasten its coming by doing some penance, for the Kingdom of God world of labor-saving devices can become by fuzzy thinking a world of penanceless religion. There is a danger that religion may be reduced to a form of inspiration like poetry or organ music by moonlight. There is a danger that there may be a trend to build up the sentimental, tone down the penitential, play up the spectacular, highlight the glamorous — compete with soap operas and the neighborhood theater, but by all means keep out the odor of brimstone lest it cut down the attendance. The attendance on the Jordan's banks was cut down by John's preaching. The Scribes and Pharisees did not come; the publicans and sinners did.

It may be thought that there can be a division of labor in this matter of penance; let Thomas Merton and the burnt and silent men that are Tranpists cover the penance assignment. We on the other hand will live in the world and spread the Kingdom by high level efficiency methods. There is a fundamental error in this. It forgets the dictum of Christ: "The Kingdom of Heaven is within you." The advance of the kingdom depends not on how many people we get to novenas, but on how many of our flock are in the state of grace, how many live in the bond of charity and self-sacrifice, how many are getting the full circulation of the blood of the Mystical Body of Christ. The Kingdom of Heaven advances not by

counting heads, but by invading hearts. Satan knows that much better than I do, and his defenses against that invasion are more clever than I can imagine. He knows there is no point in using murder to keep a man out of the Kingdom of God, if education, big business, and comfortable Christianity will do it. He knows that today the most effective means of preventing the invasion of the heart by the Kingdom of God is to keep the heart distracted with the problems of economy, to keep men resenting the greed of their fellowmen, to have them seek escape in the shining technological toys of our making, to keep beating the drum for the most money for the least effort for the most people all of the time, and above all to keep the record playing that says, "Have fun, have fun, have fun."

Penance is a satisfaction for sin. If you never committed a sin you don't need it. To believe in penance you must first believe in sin. I should not think this point needed emphasis had not Pius XII, the best informed man in the world on the moral condition of man, asserted that modern man has lost the sense of sin. To those who be-

lieve in God no proof of sin is necessary: to those who do not believe no proof is adequate. In addition to the awareness of sin there must be the lowliness of heart, humility. Humility is not looking at yourself through the wrong end of a telescope to see how small you can look. It is looking at yourself in comparison with God to see how small you are, and in comparison with Christ to see how big you can be with His grace. It is seeing vourself in the context of human and divine reality. This is by no means an easy task, but Jesus promised the Holy Spirit to make it possible. Thirdly, there must be courage. By courage I do not mean bravado. I mean inward strength and perseverance.

Now may I be specific about penances? First, the healthy can do penance. They can fulfill the penances prescribed by the Church, the penance of Friday and the Lenten abstinence: fast. This is penance with obedience. They can abstain occasionally from liquor, cigarettes, and other lawful satisfac-This is penance with tions. generosity. Then, the sick can do penance by accepting their illness in union with the cross

of Christ with the remembrance that the Mystical Christ, the Church, must suffer as did the historic Christ, with the remembrance that there is no redemption without pain and that man today badly needs demption. This is penance with love. Thirdly, the dving can do penance, especially those dying with the slow decay of cancer, tuberculosis and other wasting diseases. They can do penance by turning their sorrow into faith, by converting their pain into power that will raise the fallen world as far up the cross as Magdalene got to find there the warm redeeming blood of Christ. This is penance with heroism. God loves such heroes.

Dramatic as the life and preaching of John was his death. Look at the setting of the event: savage Moab's terrible summit. some three thousand feet above the Dead sunken Sea. Today the Arabs call the place El Mashnaka, the hanging place. In those ancient days it was called Machaerus, known as "The Watch Tower of Arabia." Now the walls and fortress lie in tumbled ruins on the wild invulnerable height. Look into the faces of the cast of the drama; the face of Herod

is swollen with birthday wine: hot and flushed it glistens in the flickering light of the lamps: the face of Herodias hard with hate, remembering the burning speech of the Baptist: "It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife": the lovely young face of Salome vivid with excitement as she clothes herself for the dance before her father and his guests: the face of the Baptist gaunt with penance and pale with peace in the small light of the Spring night that filters into his dungeon cell.

Then all at once there is a soldier in the doorway of his cell, a naked sword in his hand. Whatever he said comes down to this: tonight the Lord requires thy soul of thee. A moment's prayer, a swift stroke, and John the Baptist was dead. His head

with staring eyes was borne on a tray to the banquet hall to Salome breathing heavily from her strenuous dance. She took it. and brought it to her mother. The beauty of a girl, the drunkenness of a king, and a woman's hate joined hands to lift the man of penance to his God. What hands joined to bring them to their death I do not know, and it is not important. What is important is how they died; how much repentance was in their hearts. Important because penance is so close to the heart of the kingdom! Penance is the price of admission to the Kingdom of God on earth. and membership in the Kingdom of God on earth is the price of admission to the Kingdom of God in Heaven where the mansions of Christ glow eternally and infinitely white.

# HEROD THE GREAT: THE INTERPRETATION OF POWER

Talk given on December 4, 1949

Christians believe that there is a certain identity between Christ and his Church. This idea began with Jesus who said to his disciples, "I am the vine, you are the branches." (John 15:5). It is strikingly seen in the appearance of Jesus to Saul on the road to Damascus. Jesus said, "Saul, Saul, why dost thou persecute me?" (Acts 9:4). Saul was persecuting the Church: Jesus identified himself with the Church. Saul never forgot those words, and as Paul the great apostle and the first theologian of Christianity he spoke of the Church as the Body of Christ.

Christians believe that there is an identity of destiny between Christ and his Church. They believe that the way to glory is through the blood and blindness of Calvary; that as Jesus was crucified the Church also must be put on the cross. Its ministers who vest themselves with the garments of Christ must stand ready to be reduced to His nakedness and washed with their blood. Christians believe not only that there is a continuation of redemption in the world; they believe in a continuity of redeeming by the Church, and there is no redeeming without pain. To quote Paul again: "And what is lacking of the sufferings of Christ I fill up in my flesh for his body, which is the Church." (Col. 1:24). Does that mean that the redemption of Christ was insufficient. God forbid! It means that the mystical Christ, the Church, may suffer as well as the historical Christ. It means that the suffering of mankind makes sense in light of the suffering of the Son of God.

Christians believe that they are fortunate when they suffer persecution for the Kingdom of God. This idea started with Jesus. He said in the Sermon on the Mount: "Blessed are they who suffer persecution for justice's sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when men reproach you, and persecute you, and speaking falsely say all manner of evil against you, for my sake. Rejoice and exult, because your reward is great in heaven." (Mt. 5:10f).

These are the basic lines of Christian thinking on persecution. There is nothing hysterical or fanatical about this thinking; it is not the frenzy of escape but the quiet of acceptance. Christians do not think persecution is good; they think it is evil, but inevitable. They do not condone persecution; they condemn it, as does Pius XII in heroic speech. But they pity persecutors more than the persecuted. They do as Jesus commanded: "But I say to you, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who persecute . . . you." (Mt. 5:44). They know that Joseph Stalin is more to be pitied than Joseph Cardinal Mindszenty, just as Herod the Great is more to be pitied now than the Innocents he slaughtered.

Christians believe above all that persecutors are powerless in the really important things. They remember the words of the Lord: "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather be afraid of him who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell." (Mt. 10: 28). As the infant Christ was pursued by Herod, so the infant Church was persecuted. When it was very young it had to see clearly the meaning of suffering. That insight into pain and glory is painted in the Apocalypse, the revelation to St. John. There the optimism of the faith rings out: Christ is victor in time and eternity. "And one of the elders spoke and said to me, 'These who are clothed in white robes, who are they? And whence have they come,' And I said to him, 'My Lord, thou knowest.' And he said to me, 'These are they who have come out of the great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve him night and day in his temple, and he who sits upon the throne will dwell with them. They shall neither hunger nor thirst any more, neither shall the sun strike them or any heat. For the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them, and will guide them to the fountains of the waters of life, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes." (Apoc. 7: 13-17).

There is another Christian principle that I must mention here. It is particularly pertinent to us in America who enjoy religious freedom. Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "If one member suffers anything, all the members suffer with it." (1 Cor. 12:16). This is Christian compassion; it arises from the belief that we Christians form one Body in Christ. At this moment the Church in central Europe is hard pressed by persecution. Compassion is not passive. Like to Christ's compassion for the crowds it desires to help. It is much better to pray for the persecuted than to rage against the persecutors. To your prayers add protest where it is effective. Our weapons are moral, we have no other.

The next part of my talk is a meditation for persecutors. They are not listening, but it must be said. Perhaps there is something in it for all who have pow-The fifth commandment "Thou shalt not kill" was spoken to kings as well as commoners. Herod was not the first oriental king to kill arbitrarily; nor was he the last, though murder is now called purge. There was King David. First he took Urias' wife, and then he took his life. Then said God through the prophet Nathan: "Here is a message for thee from the Lord God of Israel: I anointed thee king of Israel . . . all Israel and Juda are in thy power . . . And thou, wouldst thou defy the Lord's commandment, and do the wrong he hates, putting Urias the Hethite to the sword, so as to take his wife for thy own? The men of Ammon struck the blow, but thou art the murderer. For the wrong thou hast done in robbing Urias the Hethite of his wife, to make her thine, murder shall be the heirloom of thy own race. This is the Lord's message to thee. I mean to stir up rebellion against thee in thy own household: before thy very own eves take thy wives from thee and give them to another, that shall bed them in the full light of yonder sun. Thou didst go to work secretly; when this threat of mine is fulfilled, all Israel and vonder sun shall witness it. Then David said to Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord." (2 Kings 1 2:6-13). Not as David was Herod. Herod had lost the sense of sin; power had throttled his conscience, as power often does.

When Herod died at seventy he had been king of Judea over thirty years. There were monuments to his power throughout the length and breadth of the land: new cities, new ports, and the shining temple at Jerusalem. Five hundred years before Herod the Babylonians had smashed the marble and gold of Solomon's temple. But now Herod's rivalled Solomon's with its porches of marble and its doors of gold. Herod was more than a masterful builder: he was a master politician. To cling to

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the throne so long in those trying times was not ordinary achievement. They were the dramatic days when Romans washed their hands in Caesar's blood, when Cleopatra toyed with Caesar's and Mark Anthony's hearts, and Octavian when master of all. ditched the republic and made himself a dictator. To stay in power through that welter of changes in Rome's fortunes demanded no little political skill. Herod was a gifted man; gifted and godless. Today one cannot even find the remains of his tomb. He is best remembered as the king who tried to kill Christ, as the first of the Christkillers. He is best remembered for blood.

It is not how much power we have but how much we love it. that corrupts us. Herod loved power more than he loved humanity. That is the common stamp of despots. I shall not read a list of Herod's political murders. His moral corruption is more shockingly revealed in that he loved power more than family. His favorite sons he put to death. Five days before he died he ordered his first-born slain. Herod's love of power was stronger than his lust. It is said that Cleopatra loved and lured him, but she who bewitched Caesar and Mark Anthony left Herod cold. He wanted to have her killed, because she plotted for his coast lands. And Herod loved power more than love. Of his ten wives his favorite and perhaps the only person he came close to loving more than himself was the royal and beautiful descendant of the Macchabees, Marianne. When he had put her to death in the fury of frustration he ordered his servants to summon her as though she were alive. He mourned her almost to madness. He had lost the person he loved most for the thing he loved more, the crown.

What is the Christian interpretation of despots abusing power to kill? They see it as the work of Satan. They cannot understand the crass and gross stupidity of despots in ermine or in overalls who are ever anew deceived by Satan, the father of lies. They are benighted and bewitched who say, "Now at last my arm is longer than God's." The Apocalypse describes them as signed with the mark of the beast: moderns speak of the psychopathology of dictators; in the last analysis call it the devil. Men work either for God or against Him. Christ said, "He that is not with me is against me." (Mt. 12:30). There is no

neutral position. Where do you stand?

It is frightening to think of Herod drawing the sword against the Redeemer. Where Herod failed Judas succeeded. He sold the Redeemer for thirty lumps of silver. For twenty centuries the Redeemer has been sold and slain; for twenty centuries God has been exchanged for pennies and power; for endless centuries men have sold their souls to buy power. It is

not how much or how little power you have that corrupts you, but how much you love it, which is to say how much you love yourself, for love of power is self-love. When the dry rot of self love sets in a man can neither live with himself nor with God; that is why there are so many suicides—Herod was twice at the point of taking his life—that is why so many seem to end their lives as failures.

# THE THREE KINGS: THE SIGNIFICATION OF GIFTS

Talk given on December 11, 1949

Lovely legends have flocked like sheep around the Christmas crib, especially around the Wise Men from the east. There is the Italian legend of the old, old lady who visits the children on the Feast of the Three Kings, Epiphany. She takes her name, Befana, from the name of the feast Epifania. There is no more excited cry in the world than the cry of the Italian child on Twelfth Night, "Ecco la Befana" (Befana's here)! Befana's adventures started a long time ago according to the legend. She was too busy cleaning house to see the Wise Men who were passing by her house on the way to Bethlehem. She said there would be time to see them on their way back, but as every child knows they did not come back the same way. So Befana is fated to look for them until she finds them. The old, old lady has a great love for children and in her search for the Wise Men she finds time to fill their stockings with gifts on Epiphany.

It was the fashion not so long ago to label as legendary all facts around which legends had grown. With better understanding of the nature of legends and of men the learned today discern that it is the singular event and the unusual personality that attracts legends. It is the scholar's assignment to distinguish between the core of fact and the layers of legend. But legends have a truth all their own. Their poetry and human warmth bring truth by a short-cut to the heart, by-passing the labyrinthine ways of the mind. Who is more real than St. Francis of Assisi, and how many legends have grown up around him! You have heard of the Wolf of Gubbio. Once there was a voracious wolf who terrorized the citizens of Gubbio by his incessant killings not only of their sheep, but of their shepherds. One day while the people held their breath Francis went alone into the forest. Quietly he spoke to the Wolf and from that day on the wolf became a quiet citizen of Gubbio. Recently a French Dominican wove from this legend of the Fioretto a longer story of the Wolf of Gubbio, and called it The Seven Miracles of Gubbio.\*

This is the story. When St. Francis made the pact with the Wolf, the Wolf gave the saint his right paw as a sign of acceptance. Francis said, "To reward you for your loyalty, I give you power, in the name of God, witness of our alliance, to perform seven miracles with this right paw of yours that has sealed our oath." Now in the town of Gubbio there was a girl named Formicella, who was ugly. frightfully ugly. The fourth miracle of the Holy Wolf of Gubbio was to make Formicella beautiful. From then on Formicella and the Wolf were never apart. Everything she would ask he would do. He had only three miracles left, and she asked him to do capricious things to satisfy her whims, like making armchairs fly and fireworks in the sky. But when the Wolf was sorely wounded in battle and Formicella thought he had no more the power of miracles she chose as her friend a handsome greyhound. One day in great rage the Wolf, forgetting his promise to St. Francis, slew the greyhound. Then he had to

flee from the enraged citizens who cried for his death. He used his last miracle to escape; he flew over their heads to the woods. There he passed his days and nights in great sorrow and repentance. One night the bells of Gubbio told him it was Christmas. "He recalled the sermons of St. Francis of Assisi, the lovely manger he had made in the church, the beautiful peace promised to men of good will even to the animals of the field and the birds of the sky. To himself even, poor Wolf." Then he prayed to St. Francis for the grace of Noel. Back to town he went and crept into church. When Formicella and all the people were going to Communion with their eyes cast down he crept up the aisle and under the manger. There they found him dead. "His mouth was full of honey. They cried, again a miracle! But if it was a miracle it was but the effect of Charity, sovereign, all powerful, and precious Charity." This story has a truth of its own about Francis, truth no cold factual account can catch. So it is with Christmas legends: they speak to the heart in the speech of the heart.

Now I would like to speak

<sup>\*</sup> The Seven Miracles of Gubbio by Raymond Leopold Bruckberger. Translated by: Gerold M. Lauck. Illustrated by Peter Lauck, Wittlesley House, New York.

about the Magi's gifts. Gold, frankincense and myrrh were the gifts they brought to the Stable at Bethlehem on that first Epiphany. It is traditional in the Church to see symbolism in these gifts. I should like to look for a symbolism for moderns, modern Americans.

In the gold we may see a symbol of wealth. I think Advent a favorable time for Americans to reflect on the meaning of wealth. We are a wealthy country, we possess an abundance of gold, an abundance of the fruits of earth, an abundance of the goods of technology. There are more automobiles per American than per Frenchman, Irishman, Dutchman, Siamese and Eskimo; more radios, televisions, frigidaires, and the rest of the lot of enamelled and chromium-plated wonders of our world. There are more mink coats, nylons, caviar and champagne, more relaxation, recreation, dissipation; we have less dirt, less disease, less tyranny, less bombing-it is high time we sat down and put our collective head in our collective hands, and did some real hard thinking about the responsibility of abundance.

I think the first question we can ask ourselves—all of us—is

this: Did we make this big, young, sprawling, wonderful wonderland that is America ourselves, or was it made for us? Did we make the oil that flows beneath its rocks, did we stretch out the great mid-western plains, did we fill the lakes that feed its rivers, put the coal and copper in the mines? We raised the skyscrapers, built the bridges, dug the tunnels, but who made the minds that made the blueprints, who made the minds that made the machines? The answers to these questions are No! and God! We did not make ourselves or our world, God made them.

It is one thing to admit this, another thing to live conscious of it: one thing to give a silent assent stimulated by a pinch of rhetoric, another thing to remember it tomorrow when you take your place amid the turning wheels, the blazing furnaces, and the tapping typewriters. It is one thing for management to admit it, another thing to act toward labor as if it is true, one thing for labor to admit it, another thing to act toward management as though it is true, one thing for government to admit it, another thing to act toward the governed as if it is true, one thing for priests to admit it, another thing to act toward the faithful as though it is true.

America has a great heart. I saw the heart of America at work in Europe. I am proud of the generous heart of America. In Trastevere one of the poorer sections of Rome, people sometimes asked me if I knew a GI named "Smitty." They will never forget him. It is because of this generosity of heart that I think great things are possible for America. I think the man who easily puts his hand in his pocket to help his fellowman will easily fold his hands in prayer. I ask you to begin your prayer by casting your eyes down upon the good earth of America, the rich pregnant soil, then to lift up your eyes to the turning wheels and the smoking chimneys, then to lower your head, then to raise your heart to God the giver of abundance. With the sense of gratitude can come the increased sense of responsibility and a greater personal response to the great commandments: shalt love the Lord thy God . . . thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

In the incense which was the second gift of the Magi we may see a symbol of religion. The

first observation I should like to make about religion in America is this: We, the American people, enjoy to the fullest two of Christianity's gifts to mankind: personal freedom and the exercise of human rights. We are enjoying the fruit of Christian civilization. If this be the historical fact, I think it is of the utmost importance that we ask ourselves: Can the fruit endure if we cut it off from the tree. can freedom and human rights survive unless rooted in religion? Secondly, the personal ethics that makes for a healthy and happy society, such as the sanctity of marriage, justice in business, right exercise of parental responsibility, cannot survive when cut off from the source of energy which is Christian truth. Christians are chaste for Christ, they are honest for Christ, they love their children for Christ. For an enduring ethics there must be a practical dynamic; for the true Christian that is faith in the divine Christ. who makes chastity, honesty. love possible. The third gift of the Magi was Myrrh. Myrrh is a symbol of mortality. It was once used for anointing the bodies of the dead. A thing that startles me about many Americans is

their supine indifference to their own mortality. I conclude this from the way they live. When thinking of mortality I think of Jaques' speech in As You Like It about the fool he met in the forest. He quotes the jester in motley to this effect:

"It is ten o'clock"

"Thus may we see" qouth he "how the world wage."

"Tis but an hour ago since it was nine,

And after one hour more 'twill be eleven.

And so from hour to hour we ripe and ripe

And then, from hour to hour we rot and rot,

And thereby hangs a tale."

Death is the most inevitable of realities. It is abnormal conduct and sub-human behavior to ignore the implications of death. It is nonsense to look for an interpretation of death that absolves you from the responsibility of living. There is a real hazard that a man who lives wildly will interpret death madly. There is great danger that men who live as though they

were nothing but flesh will die as though they were nothing but clay. There is a tremendous risk that a man who has made gold his idol will be unable to offer incense to God with a dying gesture. By the law of probabilities you run a good chance of dying as you live. In interpreting your own death I ask you to avoid one gross stupidity: Do not look for the answer to this generation alone; this is a sophisticated but not a particularly adult generation, sophistication being an adolescent mind in an adult body.

What I would drive home by these remarks is that man is more than a fun-loving, moneymaking, promiscuous animal with a thin coating of good manners. My fear is that abundance may spoil the generous heart of America. My hope is that Christmas song, Christmas kindness, and the Christ of Christmas will bring America to the feet of the Redeemer with the gold of its gratitude, the incense of its faith, and the myrrh of its mortality. Then America will be not only generous, but great, and there will be some hope for the world.

### OUR LADY MARY: THE DEFINITION OF PURITY

Talk given on December 18, 1949

I believe there is only one way to discuss purity, namely, with honesty and humility. Since we mortals do not come by honesty and humility easily, I ask you to join me in a momentary and silent prayer that I may be honest and humble in this talk.

I should like first to consider Christ's teaching on purity. He spoke of purity early in His preaching ministry. In the Sermon on the Mount he said, "Blessed are the pure of heart for they shall see God." (Matthew 5:8). We know that expression well, for it is one of the eight beautitudes, but do we know what it means? We use the word "blessed" very much. We speak of blessed candles, of the blessed apostles Peter and Paul, and we pray "Blessed be God." Obviously the word has many meanings, if it can be applied to candles, to Peter and Paul, and to God. In the words of Our Lord I have just quoted it means "fortunate." "Lucky fellow" we would say today. What is the reason for his good fortune? Jesus says, "Because he shall see God." He is here speaking of the vision of God on earth as well as in Heaven; on earth of course man sees God by faith. The condition for this good fortune Our Lord says is "purity of Heart." "Heart" means the mind, the interior man; this is the first realm of purity. "Purity" here refers not only to things of the flesh, but to anything that defiles a man, such as dishonesty, pride, avarice, hypocrisy.

This ideal of interior purity Jesus emphasized again and again. Later on in the same sermon he said, "he who casts his eves on a woman so as to lust after her has already committed adultery with her in his heart." (Matthew 5:28). The clearest statement of Jesus on this matter of interior purity is found in Mark 7. He said, "There nothing outside a man that, entering into him, can defile him, but the things that come out of a man, these are what defile him ... For from within, out of the heart of men, come evil thoughts, adulteries, immorality, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, shamelessness, jealousy, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these things come from within, and defile a man." (Mark 7: 15, 21-23). Observe two things: Jesus emphasizes that the source of spiritual defilement is within, and the list of things that defile embraces more than sins of the flesh. If anyone has a warm sense of security about heaven in the surrender of marriage let her read thoughtfully the parable of "The Wise and Foolish Virgins."

Now turn from Christ and look at the present condition of society in this matter. It is a condition of acute moral crisis; it is most alarming. Yet if diagnosis is permitted me I think the rampant immorality of our day is not so much the disease, as the symptom. The flesh burns, but the malignancy is in the heart. The illness of our age is in the soul. Modern society has lost the vision of God that comes with purity of heart. It has run down an opaque, iron curtain between its soul and its God. The iron curtain is self-love. A light has gone out in the modern soul, faith has been snuffed out by self love, and words of Jesus are fulfilled. "If the light that is in thee is darkness, how great is the darkness." (Matthew 6:23).

Self-love is the mother that begets the race of the unchaste. The indulgence of the flesh in arbitrary fashion is not the epidemic of our day, but the symptom of the deeper disease. The

burning in the body comes on because there is a winter in the heart. There is a hunger in the flesh because there is an emptiness in the soul. Lust is the pride of the body, the body in rebellion; but the first shot was fired by the heart. The body rises in revolt after the heart has raised its heel against God. There are other symptoms of the disease. Deformed self-love is seen in pride, the swollen self feeding on self, in avarice, the blind, unseeing self seeking naught but self, in egotism, the biting sharp-edged self cutting all to shelter self.

The grotesque parody of a man that is the inordinate lover of self is the outcome of a basic deviation from man's objective: it is human nature flying off the beam. Human nature as put together by its Maker is destined for its Maker; its basic direction is Godward. By God I do not mean an old man with a beard. Man moves toward that objective by free choice and by ordinate love of self. That the self-love that is in him by nature be restrained and controlled it must keep in sight the goal, its God; it must see itself in relation to its purpose and destiny. When man asserts that he has no such

destiny or that he can know nothing about it, when in other words he becomes atheistic or agnostic, the basic deviation sets in. When this idea gets the backing of propaganda in education, in literature, in the theatre, and in cocktail party small talk the infection creeps imperceptibly into men's minds and the symptoms begin to manifest themselves in men's behavior. One example: in America at the moment one marriage out of four ends in divorce.

When man has lost sight of his true objective he will substitute other goals for it. Man must move and if he does not move toward his real goal he will move toward an ersatz goal. He will create for himself a bogus absolute. Man must have a god even if he must make it himself, as the Israelites made a golden calf in the desert. A few have the energy and ruthlessness enough to make their god power and tyranny. A few have the initiative and the energy and the toughness to make their god money, but the average fellow who is flying off the beam settles for self-indulgence; it gives the greatest satisfaction for the least effort.

I know that this matter of sex

is not the most important of God's laws. I know that it ties up with human weakness, with the need of the heart as well as the need of the body. I want to understand human weakness, but I cannot condone human callousness. I do not understand defense of the indefensible. I do not like the argument of those who say: "It is all right because everybody does it," when they mean "It is all right because I do it." I am pleading for common sense as well as morality. know that there are graver sins than adultery. I know that the sex commandment is the sixth commandment, not the first. But I also know that it is the one that is writing the blackest page in our history, breaking up homes, breaking children's hearts; it is a sin crying to heaven for vengeance, for self-love expressed in lust is the idol that modern man has set up in place of God, and it is, if ever there was one, a bogus absolute.

I believe that erotic love has become such a force in our world today, having so many champions, conscious or unconscious, so many advocates, so many committees, that there is only one force that can fight it and beat it flat to the ground—divine love

in human hearts. If that force is to be set on fire it must, like Constantine, be inspired to victory by a sign in the sky. We have the sign. The Apocalypse gives us the sign: "And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon was under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars." (12:1). Our Lady Mary is our victory sign. The truth that is in her is the only cure for the malignancy in the modern soul.

This is the truth that is in her: human nature alone will tend to love wrongly for it is a fallen nature; only with the grace of God will it love rightly. Mary loved rightly, and her biography is summed up in the words of the angel: "Hail, full of grace." Mary's life, Mary's love, Mary's purity are the outward symptoms of the right kind of love, the love for God and Christ that is born of grace. St. Bernard says of her, "In her womb was the grace of divinity; in her heart the grace of charity, upon her lips the grace of courtesy, in her hands the grace of mercy and generosity. And she was truly full of grace, for of her fullness captives have received redemption, the sick their cure, the sorrowful their comfort, sinners their pardon, the just have received grace, the angels joy, and the Blessed Trinity honor and glory, and the Son of Man the substance of human flesh." Purity was the outward radiance of Mary's healthy soul. was a quiet in her body because there was a peace in her soul. There was a detachment in her flesh because there was an attachment in her heart to God. Mary's purity is the expression of Mary's passion, the passion of her spirit for God. The truth in Mary is the truth her Son expressed the night before he died for us: "Without me you can do nothing." (John 15:5). Without Him we cannot love rightly and love we must.

I see all this confirmed in the story of another Mary, Mary of Magdala. One day when the Divine Master was at dinner at the home of Simon, the Pharisee, a woman who was a sinner came and bathed his feet with her tears, wiped them with her hair, kissed them and anointed them with ointment. There were two reactions. The host said to himself: "This man, were he a prophet, would surely know who and what manner of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a

sinner." (Luke 7:39). Then there was the reaction of Jesus. He knew what manner of woman she was. He knew that the unconventional gestures at His feet were the only language she knew to tell Him what was in her heart. He knew that she was fed up with the flesh, He knew what she saw in Him, He knew that nothing coming from without could defile Him, He knew that in her heart a new love was born, the kind of love He had come to set the earth on fire with, the love of God in Christ. the love that in ten minutes can wash away ten years of lesser loves, and He said, "Her sins, many as they are, shall be forgiven her, because she has loved much." (Luke 7:47). If love like that is possible for Magdalene it is possible for anyone, for Christ makes it possible. After Jesus had gone away from this earth one day in the Upper Room in Jerusalem, Mary, the scarlet woman from Magdala, knelt beside Mary, the white, white woman from Nazareth, and they received the Eucharist from the

hands of John, the big black fisherman from Galilee. All three were white within, as white as the grace of Christ could make them, as white as the consecrated bread they ate. Grace begets the race of the chaste, and the Eucharist is the food that nourishes it. The purity we extol is for all believers in Christ, for the young and the old, the wed and the single, for men and women, for each one according to his condition.

Now I ask those who believe the things that I say to pray for those who do not, not with complacency or smugness, but with honesty and humility. Pray for this, that our age will rise up and batter down the iron curtain of self love and come to see the bright vision of God, and come to know that "God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God and God in him," (1 John 4: 16) and come to burn with love of Jesus with which Paul burned when he wrote, "For me to live is Christ," (Phil. 1:21) and come to say, "For me to love is Christ."

# JESUS AT BETHLEHEM: THE EXPRESSION OF LOVE

. Talk given on December 25, 1949

On Christmas Eve a door was opened that had been shut for sixteen years. I speak of the door at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome that is opened only for the Holy Year. On Christmas Eve Pope Pius XII inaugurated the Holy Year as he passed through that door robed in the white garments of the chief shepherd of the Church. In the year to come millions of his flock will pass through the door on their way to the tomb of the apostle Peter. They will remember the words of Jesus: "I am the door. If anyone enters by me he will be safe." (John 10:9). They will see these words on the official medal of the Holy Year.

This is the twenty-fifth Holy Year in the history of the Church. The first was held in the year 1300. It appears that the idea was born in the hearts of the faithful who flocked to Rome in the anxious days of Boniface VIII. The Holy Year is a time of spiritual regeneration marked by penance and pilgrimage to the Eternal City. It gives me great happiness to tell you of the Holy Year for a per-

sonal reason. I was ordained a priest in Rome the last time the holy door was opened. The Holy Year of 1933 marked the nineteenth centenary of the redemptive death of Our Lord.

The fatherly human heart of the Holy Father may be seen in his words announcing the Holy Year. "May the days of the Holy Year bring the answer of heaven to the prayer that rises as from one heart, from Shepherd and flock, from the City of Rome and the entire Catholic world, before the throne of God: 'Give us joy for the days in which thou hast humbled us, for the years in which we have seen evils." (Psalm 89:15). He knows how much so much of the world needs an end of pain and a beginning of joy.

The intentions of the Holy Year as defined by the Holy Father are: "The sanctification of souls through prayer and penance, and unswerving loyalty to Christ and the Church. Activity in behalf of peace, and the protection of the Holy Places. Defense of the Church against the renewed attacks of her enemies,

and prayer for the gift of true faith for those in error, the unbelievers, and the godless. Realization of social justice and works of charity for the lowly and the needy."

Now I shall read the prayer of the Holy Year. To all those who write for it we shall send an attractive leaflet containing this prayer and a striking picture of the Holy Father kneeling at prayer.

"Almighty and eternal God, with our whole soul we thank Thee for the great gift of the Holv Year. Heavenly Father, Thou Who sees all things, Who searchest and dost guide the hearts of men, make them responsive, in this time of grace and salvation, to the voice of Thy Son. May the Holy Year be for all men a year of purification and sanctification, of interior life and reparation, the year of the great return and of the great pardon. Bestow on those, who are suffering persecution for the Faith, Thy spirit of fortitude, to unite them inseparably with Christ, and His Church, Protect, O Lord, the Vicar of Thy Son on earth towith all bishops. gether priests, religious, and all the faithful. Vouchsafe that all, both priests and laity, the young, the mature, and the old. united intimately thought and affection, may become as a solid rock, against which the fury of Thy enemies will break in vain. May Thy grace enkindle in all men love for the many unfortunate people, whom poverty and misery reduce to a condition of life unworthy of human beings. Arouse in the hearts of those who call Thee Father a hunger and thirst for social iustice and for fraternal charity in deeds and in truth. 'Grant, O Lord, peace in our days'-peace to souls, peace to families, peace to our country, peace among nations. May the rainbow of peace cover with the sweep of its serene light the Land sanctified by the life and passion of Thy Divine Son. God of all consolation! Deep is our misery, grave are our faults, countless our needs. But greater still is our trust in Thee. Conscious of our unworthiness, we lovingly place our lot in Thy hands, uniting our weak prayers to the intercession and the merits of the most glorious Virgin Mary

and all the Saints. Grant to the sick, resignation and health; to young men, the strength that is born of faith; to young girls, the gift of purity; to fathers, prosperity and holiness for their families: to mothers, success in their mission of rearing their children; to orphans, affectionate protection; to the refugees and prisoners, their fatherland, and to all men Thy grace, in preparation and in pledge of the unending happiness of heaven. Amen."

Now I come to speak of Christmas Day, not only of Christmas present, but of Christmas past, and Christmas eternal. In these three I see the full meaning of Christmas.

Christmas is a birthday. By Christmas eternal I mean the heavenly birthday of Jesus before he had that human name. I mean the everlasting generation of the Son of God by the Father. "I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, Our Lord." I say "Son," but I do not mean it in the sense that I am my father's son, for mine was a human birth, his divine, mine was a physical birth, his spiritual. We have a comparison of a sort close at hand. The thoughts I am now uttering were conceived in my mind. We say that "an idea is born." We may call this talk my brain-child. Theologians think there is some resemblance between the mind and God, since we are made to God's image and likeness. This comparison is suggested by the Gospel of St. John, for he calls the Son of God the "Word." The divine person of the Son is the expression of the Father. John wrote: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." (John 1:1). This name for the nameless Son was no doubt suggested to John by the Book of Wisdom. It says: "For while all things were in quiet silence, and the night was in the midst of her course, thy almighty word leapt down from heaven from thy royal throne." (Wisdom 18:14). Jesus referred to his eternal birth, the eternal Christmas when He said in the Temple of Jerusalem, "Believe me, before ever Abraham came to be, I am." (John 8:58). He referred to it at the Last Supper when he said, "I am in the Father, and the Father is in me." (14:11) and when he said, "All that belongs to the Father belongs to me." (16:15).

The first hint that heaven's Son would have an earthly birth was given to the Prophets of old.

Long before Jesus came Isaias sang: "For a child is born to us. A Son is given to us, . . . And His name is called, Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." (9:5).

Now come and look at Christmas past, the Christmas of Bethlehem. The first Christmas takes its meaning from the eternal Christmas. St. John weds the eternal Christmas to Bethlehem in the loveliest line ever written: "And the Word was made flesh, and came to dwell among us." (1:14). Bethlehem was host to a heavenly visitor. He came wrapped in the warmth of Mary's womb until the tender moment when "she wrapped him in swaddling-clothes and laid him in a manger," (Luke 2:7) and the Son of God had a human birthday. The Son of God was now Mary's boy. As He looked like His mother in the cast of His features, the color of His eyes, and the movement of His hair, so in His person He was "the image of the invisible God." (Col. 1:5) and John wrote: "We saw His glory-such glory as of the only begotten of the Father." (1:14).

Without the Christmas of eternity the Christmas of time

is meaningless music. Without the eternal Father, without the eternal Son, without the Most Holy Trinity "our preaching is groundless, and your faith too is groundless." (1 Cor. 15:14). The divinity of Christ is the reality that makes Christmas. Christianity and Christians. This is the faith of our fathers. The art of countless canvasses. the color of countless cathedral windows, the words of countless carols, the blood of countless martyrs, the purity of countless virgins, the love of countless mothers, the sanctity of countless saints—all express the faith in the divine Christ. The eternal Christmas, the timeless birth of the Son from the Father, is the infinite light that poked a finger through the black ceiling of the world to shine as a star over Bethlehem on the first Christmas night.

The great mystery of Bethlehem is expressed in one word—love. Bethlehem makes God the property of everyman, not the sheltered orphan of philosophers minds. Everyman understands a child. A child is the living fruit of shared love. The Christ Child is the living fruit of the love the Father shares with mankind, his infinite love.

The Holy Spirit is that eternal love of God, and by the power of the Holy Spirit Mary brought forth the Christ Child. Then the vague and distant thing that is the love of God became the close and human thing that is the affection of Jesus. Jesus is the love of God spoken in a language that man can understand. When He says "I am the way, the truth, and the life," men can understand it because they can understand Him. Bethlehem is the of divine love kindergarten where the rudest peasant and the smoothest savant can learn the meaning of the love of God. Simple shepherds learned it and Wise Men from the east. A man comes to the kindergarten of divine love at long last, after he has come away from the universities "empty-hearted." At Bethlehem he learns the longest truth in the shortest sentence: "God is love." (1 John 4:8). Then he repeats his lesson in a humble and grateful whisper: "In this has the love of God been shown in our case, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world that we may live through Him." (4:9).

What shall I say of Christmas present? Christ is as silent tonight as He was the first silent night. The angels spoke for Him then and said. "Peace on earth." May I speak for Him now and say, "Peace on earth." The message is the same because the need is the same. People are giving books this Christmas, books about peace, "Peace of Mind," "Peace of Soul." People are reading about peace, not because they have it, but because they want it. Man past and present is haunted by the unquiet heart. Nations too are anxious about peace, for they know that cold war is not the road that leads to it. Happily Christmas can somehow take us bevond the world of dithers and dictators into the quiet center of the hurricane. In the fortress of the family on Christmas all seems secure "against the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune."

Christmas comes for us when the days are coldest, when the days are shortest, and the nights longest. The cold drives men indoors, the darkness makes them light brighter fires. The earth is still, so men sing. Is Christmas the total sum got by adding cards to carols to gifts to evergreens? It is not, and everyone knows it is not. Christmas customs are accumulated from many lands and many peoples; they are all trying to say something. Christmas is first and last a fact. but it is also a memory. Is it not true that memories that sleep all year awake on Christmas Eve? Christmas has the strange quality of making us more sensitive to joy and sorrow. For some reason we are more human, more thoughtful, more reminiscent, more kind, more loving. Is it not because a memory clings to this night? Is it not because on this day was born the one who loved men as no one else can love them, as only God can love them?

I know that when most men try to imagine God, He seems like a fuzzy, foggy, cloudy negative in a solution. God to the average mortal is too vast to think of, too powerful to imagine, and too frightening to make for consoling reflection. When he hears the latest figures on the age of the earth, the distance of the newest star seen with the newest telescope, the newest computation of the destructive power of the smallest particle of matter, the atom, he feels that He cannot imagine the world, much less imagine the God that made it. For God who put such men as us in such a world as this there was only one thing for divine love to do: make Himself known in a way that we could understand. Everybody can understand a child; everybody can love a child-especially Mary's Child and God's. That's why there is a Christmas. God bless you on it everyone.

### 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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