

McLarney, J. J.  
The Faith is ...  
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# The Faith is Simple



*J. J. McLarney O.P.*

*The Hour of Faith*



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# THE FAITH IS SIMPLE

By

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## THE FAITH IS SIMPLE

(Talk given on October 24, 1943)

The other day while I was visiting some friends, the conversation turned to certain of the teachings and practices of the Catholic Church . . . as it frequently does when a priest is present. One of the group, who is not of our Faith, remarked that the Church and her teachings seemed to him a very complicated business. He assured me that he had nothing against the Church whatever; that he had really made an earnest effort to understand her. But, he said, he was discouraged by the impression that the Catholic faith is an intricate pattern of inconsistent dogmas, moral prohibitions, sacraments and sacramentals, meticulous and lengthy ceremonies, all of which add up to a shapeless creed, quite dull and unwelcome to the rational or modern mind.

I sympathized with this man's attitude, for I can very well see how such a notion might arise. If you stand outside a church and look at its windows, you may be completely baffled by the lines you see. But if you go inside and look at the windows you will have a colorful and perhaps artistic prospect in stained glass. It is so with the Faith. From the outside looking in, that is, through the eyes of its

critics or enemies, the true Faith may seem either pretentious or meaningless. That is the impression of those who have never walked inside to look around. That is how it might honestly appear to any one who is not a Catholic.

For that matter, as I told my friend, that is even how it might appear to many Catholics. They themselves are sometimes puzzled by many things in the Faith. The questions which they ask often prove their confusion. They are shamed by their ignorance about a Church which is two thousand years old, the largest single organization of humans in the world, international as no other thing is international, and careful of the spiritual needs of hundreds of millions of people. How could they know everything about it? How could one know everything readable in a public library? For that matter, how could you know everything about your own bodies and minds, with which you are very intimate? There is no reason for you or me to be discouraged because we cannot answer all questions with the readiness of an expert on "Information Please". (I doubt very much if those experts could give a

very good account of themselves in a quiz about the Catholic Church. I wouldn't be so sure of myself, either).

There is one clear fact, however, which encourages me; and it should encourage you to take another glance at the Faith, if you never have, or to reconsider it, even though you do profess it. The fact is that the Faith is simple, very, very simple—about as simple as any organization to which you may belong.

Compare the Faith to the American way of life. You hold allegiance to your country. You are an American, you live in the American way. Look around your room now and see the symbols and fruits of Americanism: a service flag in the window, an American newspaper on your knee, an American radio here, an American telephone there. All these possessions come to you through American channels. The people who produced them, sold them, delivered them, service them, these people have done so under American laws and regulations—laws and regulations about which you may know little or nothing. But without the laws and regulations these possessions might not be in your home today! they might never have been bought or paid for (if they are), or delivered

to your home, if their production, sale, and distribution were not regulated by government. But what do you know about this governing and regulating? You probably know what applies to your business. If you are a lawyer or an official, you may know a lot about it.

But I doubt if there is a man in the country who knows it all. (He'd be too wise to admit it, anyway).

We all share ignorance, but there is one fact which we all know; your tailor, your newsdealer, your butcher and baker, the telephone operator, and the milkman—they all know that every law and regulation can be traced back to charter principles which are found in the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence. The Federal Constitution, the common possession of all, gives us all a voice in our government and imposes obligations on us according to time and circumstance. It is a simple document, quite within the grasp of the ordinary mind.

All our law goes back to these two great charters. You must obey the traffic signals and stop at a red light. Why? Because the Declaration establishes firmly the other fellow's right to life. Without these charters, our situations would be very different today.

The point is that we do not fore—for example, why the priest consider Americanism foolish or mixes a little water with the wine impossible merely because we do in the chalice. But should these not know everything about its secondary questions confuse you? Are you laws. We can be good citizens if we understand the principles which are found in the Constitution and the Declaration. We should study our laws and learn more about Americanism, but we need not move to another country simply because we don't know all there is to know about our own. We can still be good Americans. (To be *good* Americans, I might say here, means that we should try to be better citizens each day. Patriotism, like any form of goodness, is not static; it goes ahead.)

Isn't it the same way with the Faith? If you're a Catholic, you've been to Mass today—or you're going, I hope—and you saw—or will see—the priest in green vestments. You may know that green, the symbol of hope, is worn on the Sundays following Pentecost, and that today is the 19th Sunday after Pentecost. On the other hand you may not have known this at all. You may have wondered why the priest didn't wear white or red or purple.

Or perhaps you were struck by some other phase of the ceremony which you'd never thought of be-

less a Catholic because you do not know? Of course not. You know what the Mass is, fundamentally. And you can find the answers to these secondary questions if you ask. If you are not a Catholic, these apparent puzzles should not drive you away. The Faith and its practice can be, and should be, and must be, very simple.

All dogma—and dogma means a teaching, a lesson, nothing more—all Catholic dogma can be reduced to one Catholic charter, the Apostles' Creed, the Catholic Faith in twelve articles. Each article has implications. But so has each article of the Constitution, as the Supreme Court will tell you. Catholics know their Creed. So do many others. It is much shorter than the Constitution or the Declaration. All dogmatic teaching of the Catholic Church is reducible to it.

We believe these truths and we try to live by them. To live by them, faithfully, certain rules of conduct are necessary. We call them the Ten Commandments. Everyone has a rough idea of what they are. Christ compressed the first three into one:

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, with thy whole soul, and thy whole mind. This is the first and greatest commandment.”

And He compressed the last seven into another:

“Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.”

These two laws, given more fully in the Ten Commandments, govern all our relationships with God and our fellow-humans. They are all-inclusive. Without them, there can be no democracy. They are natural, orderly, just, and effective. They were not made by the Church. They are written in nature. God announced them to Moses. Christ explained them to us. If you know a law which contradicts them, do not obey that law. It is immoral. The Church insists that her children follow the Commandments. They are simple and wise. Anyone who is truly rational, truly modern, truly humane, must accept them. And they are not too hard to live by. On the contrary, attempts to live apart from them have always resulted in war, injustice, and all manner of evil.

The Apostles' Creed is the Code of Belief. The Ten Commandments are the Code of Morals. There is also a Code of Discipline—which we

call the Six Precepts of the Church. Discipline is a hard word to some ears. But no organization, whether it be a nation or a bridge club, a navy or a cafe, can exist without some internal rules. Neither can a Church. So she imposes six precepts on her members. They regulate the observance of the Lord's Day, the reception of the sacraments, the support of the Church, fasts, abstinences, and marriage. These rules are imposed so that we may obey the Ten Commandments more easily. They are certainly not many, only six. Yet all Church Law can be boiled down to them. And they, too, are simple.

It is important to remember that the Creed, the Commandments, and the Precepts, are binding on all Catholics from the Pope right down to folks like you and me. The priest is bound, even as his people. There is no such thing as a Church dignitary being above the law. It binds him, too.

Well, these are the Codes of Catholicism: the Apostles' Creed, which should be acceptable to any student of the Bible; the Ten Commandments, which should be agreeable to any reasonable person of good morals; the Six Precepts, which should not be repugnant to any man or woman of good will. There are hundreds, thousands, of



laws and regulations which flow from these three. A body of 360 millions can hardly get along without teaching, without due process of law, without the etiquette of ceremonies, without scores of functions and functionaries. The Government cannot. Neither can the Church. She must make her doctrine clear; she must make morality firm; she must guide her members with a steady hand.

Why does the Church teach and guide and rule? In order that Catholics may love the Lord with our whole heart, our whole soul, and our whole strength, that we may love our neighbors as ourselves. The Church exists to help us in obeying these rules. Without a teacher we can become confused . . . and quickly. With help from a teacher—and the Church is that teacher—we can have a simple faith, we can live a simple faith. Not any faith at all, but THE Faith, according to St. Paul: “the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace . . . . One Lord, one faith, one baptism.”

# YOUR ROSARY, RIGHT AND WRONG

(Talk given on October 31, 1943)

Marines in the South Pacific may think of the prayers which are be seen wearing Rosaries around their necks. There are two reasons for this. One reason is that the shorts they wear—and sometimes they wear little else—have no pockets. The other reason is that they revere the Rosary. Some of them are not Catholics. But they understand that the Rosary is for everyone, not for Catholics alone. They revere it, not as some kind of rabbit's foot, but as a simple instrument in a good method of prayer.

Many people think that the Rosary is exclusively for Catholics. It is not exclusively Catholic. (Nothing Catholic is exclusive.) It should appeal to all Christians. And why not? The Bible furnishes the chief vocal prayers of the Rosary. The Our Father is our Lord's own prayer. The Hail Mary is the salutation of the Angel Gabriel made to Mary, the Mother of Jesus. We repeat the Lord's Prayer as we finger the large beads in the Rosary. We repeat the Angelic Salutation as we touch the small beads. But this is only the vocal element of the Rosary. That is not all. The most important element of the Rosary is the mental prayer, the thought. We do not merely

uttered, but of certain great events, mysteries of the life story of Christ. There are fifteen of these "mysteries" in the Rosary. Five recall His joyful Childhood, the preface to our salvation. Five more recall His Sufferings and Death, the price of our salvation. Five, last of all, recall His glorious Resurrection, the pledge of our salvation.

These mysteries are Joyful, Sorrowful, and Glorious. The Joyful Mysteries are: the Annunciation of Christ's coming to Mary, the Visitation of Mary to Elizabeth, the Birth of Jesus, His Presentation, and the Finding of Him in the Temple at Jerusalem. The Sorrowful Mysteries are: His Agony in the Garden, the Scourging of Him at the Pillar, the Crowning with Thorns, the Carrying of the Cross, and the Crucifixion. The Glorious Mysteries are: His Resurrection from the Tomb, His Ascension to Heaven, The Descent of the Holy Spirit upon Mary and the Apostles, the Assumption of Mary to Heaven, and her Coronation as its Queen.

Now to pray the Rosary properly one should repeat the Lord's Prayer and the Angelic Salutation and, at the same time, meditate

about one of these mysteries. There is no conflict here between words and thoughts. When a man sings an old love song to one he loves, he can think more about the beloved than the song. When we sing the Star Spangled Banner, we can think more about our country than about the banner, or more about the banner than about the words of the anthem. So it is with the Rosary. We recite, with singing hearts, the wondrous words of our Lord and those addressed to His Mother, while at the same time we remember and think, as she would think, about the divine charity and beauty and truth of His life, His death, and His Resurrection.

What Christian cannot do that? What Christian can help but do that? The Rosary is a devout synopsis of the Bible story. The events of the Bible, especially those events which took place in the life of Jesus, are not merely for Christians to read about. They are for Christians to think about, too. They are for Christians to pray about. That is why there is a Rosary. If there is a Bible, there ought to be a Rosary. If Christians revere the Bible, they ought to love the Rosary, too. The Bible is for all to read. The Rosary is for all to pray; and to pray rightly.

When you say the Rosary, your method can be right or wrong. For some it is too long. For some it is too short. The Irish sexton felt that it was too short one night. The priest, whose position he envied so, was called away to attend the dying. He was leading the people in the Rosary. Before he hurried off, he told the sexton to continue the prayers where he had to stop. With glory thus thrust upon him, the sexton carried on. An hour later the priest came back and, to his amazement, heard the Rosary still going on. It should take no more than fifteen minutes. But the sexton was reluctant to let his temporary greatness pass. He was chanting bravely: "The thirty-seventh sorrowful mystery, Barabbas stabs Pontius Pilate." The sexton was wrong. There are only five sorrowful mysteries. And they give us enough to think about.

For some people the Rosary is too long. Three little children thought so as they brought their flocks of sheep to a small hollow known as the Cova da Iria, near Fatima, a village about ninety miles from Lisbon. The children were Lucia dos Santos, a girl of ten, and her cousins, Francisco and Jacinta Marto. Francisco was nine and Jacinta was seven. Each day after they ate their lunch, they

knelt, as all the faithful in that country find time to do, to say the Rosary. Playfully, as children will, they would begin a streamlined version of it. On each bead they would abbreviate the prayer. On the large beads they would say only the two words "Our Father", and on the small beads only the two words "Hail Mary". Winking and laughing they would skip through the Rosary. Their time for the distance was hard to beat.

The three youngsters were wrong. The Rosary is not too long. It might have taken them ten, twelve, fifteen minutes at most. That is not too much time to spend with timeless truth. And Lucia and Francisco and the tiny Jacinta, in the midst of signs and wonders, found out that they were wrong in the most remarkable spiritual event of the Twentieth Century. But that is another story which could be told at another time.

Some people are inclined to improvise prayers in the Rosary. That is wrong, too. It is important to remember that the introductory and concluding prayers are not essential, but the Pater and the Ave, that is the Our Father and the Hail Mary, in proper and orderly recital, are essential, if the prayer is to remain a Rosary.

The evening Rosary was a daily

custom in our family. When I was not old enough for school, I was old enough to say the Rosary. We would kneel around the dining table or at bedside. My father would begin. My mother would keep order—and sometimes that was a job. Each child, in order of age, was permitted to "lead" a decade, that is, to say the first part of the Our Father and the ten Hail Marys of each mystery. The others would respond with the second part. My sister Mary always preceded me. She was about six. I was about a year younger. I noticed with what an unctuous "smile in her voice" she would say "Hail, *Mary*". She took a great pride in her own wonderful name. One evening—could you blame me—her priority over that prayer became too much for me. When my turn came, I began "Hail Jimmy, full of grace." After the uproar, my father explained to me that I was wrong: we do not pray to ourselves and we do not think of ourselves when we say the Rosary. Then on we went with it, until the Rosary was finished and the day for little people was done.

Did this Rosary in childhood make us superstitious? Did it make us bigoted and narrow at an early age? No. It taught us that our prayers are best when they are

prayers from the Bible. It taught us that we should not pray to ourselves but *to God through His Mother*. It taught us that we do not think of ourselves, but of God and His mercy. It taught us that

“Words without thoughts never to heaven go.”

It taught us to remember always that the Faith of our Fathers has a foundation in history: in the life and death and resurrection of the God who was made Man, who died for our sins at the hands of a few Jews, who are forgiven, because the God-Man said of them—and we thought about that in the Fifth Sorrowful Mystery—the God-Man prayed for them: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do”.

There is no greater cure for bigotry and anti-Semitism than that. And it can be taught, impressed, it can be remembered, in the recitation of the Rosary. Forgiveness? We could do with a lot more of it this morning.

But that is only one lesson which the Rosary teaches. My time is too short to tell you of the many more.

The over-all lesson is this. The Rosary gives us a daily companionship with Christ, a companionship comparable to that of His Mother during the thirty years of

His private life at Nazareth. Out of it we learn that courtesy and Christian nobility which should mark our dealing those who know us best: our families.

The Rosary gives us a daily intimacy with Jesus, such as was His Mother’s privilege; an intimacy which draws us into the garden of His sorrows where He wept for us, to the pillar where He was scourged for us, to the Cross where He died for us. If our boys brave today’s battles because they know that others before them have been heroes—because they have what we call morale—then men and women can stand up to danger and death in the cause of justice and charity, if they only remember that Jesus Christ did just that for them.

The Rosary teaches what dreadful wrongs can be wrought by political leaders who so grossly misconceive their position that in their hands the rights of man are no more precious than the rights of pigs in a butchery. It teaches that death for the freedom of men is a gateway to glory, not the mere glory of the memory of men, but the very real and living glory of a resurrection like that of Christ, who prevailed over death itself, when He rose out of the tomb in triumphant pledge to all ages that

God and His justice will prevail. Come war, come wounds, God and His justice will prevail. It teaches hope in that victory and the peace to follow—a hope borne out of an empty tomb and lifted to the height of heaven where Christ, our King, is lifted up to draw all things to Himself.

Now what do you think? Should there be in the hearts of children and their elders a respect for courtesy and nobility? Or can we do without that sort of thing?

What do you think? Is there any need in this day of heroism in suffering, and forgiveness, and understanding? Or can we do without that sort of thing?

What do you think? Is there any need today of hope? Any need of victory, any need today of sacred trust and confidence in God and His justice and His right? Any need of these things? How our souls shiver in the need! Then there is need of something like the Rosary, which teaches them. The Church must needs preach it. We need to pray it.

Learn about the Rosary. Learn as little children, like Bernadette—it was her song—like Lucia, and Francisco, and Jacinta. It is our Lady's prayer. It is our Lady's way to peace. Learn her way of prayer. Take her path to peace. And live, at last, her way of life.

## REASONS FOR RATIONING

(Talk given on November 7, 1943)

Here in my hand is a ration book. I have been meditating on it. I am very ignorant about War Ration Books, because I am not forced to shop for my dinner. There is a man in our house who does that for a hundred of us. And he does it very well. Rationing is not new to him. The people in houses like ours have been rationed for centuries. Meatless days are twice a week the year around. Lent for our house is not just forty days, but at least six months; and that means meat but once a day, except on meatless days. Other things are measured accordingly. Such is the way of men in monasteries.

This War Ration Book, however, is something new. On its cover I can read my name signed under a promise that I will use it for the purpose authorized by the Office of Price Administration. I read that it is a criminal offense to violate rationing regulations. On this other War Ration Book, I read the statement of the government as follows: "Persons who violate rationing regulations are subject to \$10,000 fines, or imprisonment or both." Those are hard words for me, or for anybody. I cannot even buy the food I want to buy from a person who wants to sell without incurring such dangers. Who thinks he can push me around, who thinks he can regulate my appetite, who thinks he can deprive me of food? Who? Why, the Government can do that, the Government is doing just that, in our present emergency. And we all agree with the principle that the Government has a perfect right to do it at the present time.

The War Ration Book makes me think that, if we hunger and thirst now, we shall have our fill later on. And thus we'll win the peace. It makes me think about the grain of wheat which buries itself now that it may burst forth green in the spring. It makes me remember we are not giving things equally to everyone now, but are curtailing our food on the home front, that our soldiers may have more than sufficient to win the war; we are giving to each according to his need, as St. Augustine advises. This War Ration Book makes me think about the occupied and conquered countries which may be given enough to eat, because we deny ourselves something of our abundance. It makes me think that Christ will tell us on the last day:

“I was hungry, and you gave me a spiritual front—the Church tells to eat . . . . as long as you did it her children that there are also to one of these my brethren, you times for fast.

did it to me” (*Matthew 25: 35-40*)

It makes me think that we can revive a place like Sicily, for example, and once more, as Longfellow writes, make “the happy island dance in corn and wine.” This ration book reminds me that I must suppress my rights for the time in favor of the common good of all. That is why Uncle Sam has pulled in his belt. That is why we all follow suit. That is why Liberty has blown her trumpet and we all march in line. Some pitiable Americans may, like skulking dwarfs, creep in and out of black markets. But most of us are keeping in step. America has a war to win, as well as a face to feed.

Rationing is nothing new, as I said before. Long ago the Church blew a trumpet in Sion and sanctified a fast. There was a war going on then and there is a war going on now, as far as the Church is concerned. It is a war against evil—against the evil of flesh and blood in our own fallen nature; against the evil of the spirit of wickedness in high places; against powers and dominations of Hell. To win that war, the Church, like a wise old Mother who has seen war and strife and dying souls on many

What does Mother Church say? She says, in the Code of Canon Law, that at certain times the quantity of food must be cut to one full meal, and perhaps two small collations daily. That means fast. She says, also, that at certain times the quality of food must be regulated, so that flesh meat is forbidden. That means abstinence. She says that all who are more than six years old are obliged to abstain. She says that all who are more than twenty and less than sixty are obliged to fast. On each Friday, during Lent, and on certain other days, these laws are active. That, for the information of those who wonder and may demur, is a very brief statement of the laws of fast and abstinence. It is not very complicated.

Well, I might say, “Who is the Church that I am pushed around the dining table like that? Who is the Church, that she says I must swallow fish and pass up meat? Who is the Church, that she makes laws about one meal a day and other starvation routines? Who or what is this Church?”

That is not a difficult question to answer. It is no more difficult to answer that question, “Who is the



Church?" than it is to answer the question, "Who is this country?—this country which regulates my food, my shoes, my gasoline and the cuffs of my trousers?" Who is this country? Why, you are this country. So am I. So are all of us; we are this country. And no one can say nay to us if we wish to eat lightly. This country has a government which regulates the amounts and kinds of things which we use, and eat, and wear—because we have a war to win.

Who is this Church? We, you and I, all who acknowledge it as the one and true Society founded by Christ for our salvation. We are the Church. And no one can say us nay, or say that we are fanatics, or say that we are very foolish, if for good purposes, we wish to serve a light table. The Church, that is, we, have a Church government which regulates the amounts and the kinds of things which we eat—because we have a war to win, that is, we have souls to save.

That is why Catholics observe the laws of fast and abstinence. It is all very reasonable. No one is asked to do the impossible. If a person be sick, or an expectant mother, or a working man or woman, the fast and, sometimes, the abstinence, is relaxed. Even the

family of the working man may eat what he is permitted to eat, so that the domestic situation will not be too complicated. In times like these, bishops have relaxed the laws more freely because of local conditions. As far as I know, there have been no cases of malnutrition to be laid at the door of the Catholic Church.

Does the law of fast and abstinence make Catholics become like prisoners on bread and water? Hardly, if my own experience can be cited. Does the law restrict our freedom? Not at all! On the contrary, the law of fast and abstinence is an assurance of greater freedom.

Fast and abstinence assure us of freedom from want. There are many kinds of want. There is the want of food for some, because others are selfish about food. If the fast and abstinence of Catholics can impress on the minds of the greedy that one's stomach is not a divinity, those who have will be more inclined to give to those who have not, and there will be better distribution of it all. The last few years in England have witnessed that blessing.

Then there is also the want of health. Fast and abstinence are an assurance of health. Too many people dig their graves with their

teeth, because they have not learned self-discipline and control. There is some foundation for the belief that this is the reason why there is sometimes such lethargy among the rich and such vitality among the poor.

This may also be one of the reasons why there is such a healthy birth-rate among the poor and such an unhealthy birth-rate among the rich.

This could explain why a rich country often has a problem of manpower.

Most biologists will agree that animals that are slightly underfed multiply more abundantly than animals which are sleek and fat. Fast and abstinence, governed by moderation—there can be intemperance, you know, of too little, and intemperance of too much—fast and abstinence, governed by moderation, are an assurance of health. The Church, wise old Mother, is a good nurse, and a good dietitian.

Fast and abstinence make for freedom for those who fast and abstain. They make for freedom from fear. There is the fear which stalks the world today that monsters of might and materialism will devour the spirit of liberty and personal right. To be free of that fear we have rolled up our sleeves, we have converted our factories and

machines, we have produced our guns and planes and tanks, we have flung the healthiest and the best-equipped and the best-fed army in history all over the world. And we fast and abstain, with ration books, to strike down that stalking fear and raise that freedom on high.

There is also the fear in every human heart that the greedy flesh will overcome and devour the beauty of the free soul which longs for the happiness of God. There is the fear that the law of hungry members, the craving of bodily appetites, will conquer the law of the mind, which tells us that it is better to need a little than to have too much. There is the fear that the body will have its reward in the flesh pots of pleasure in this life at the cost of the eternal loss of the soul. But that fear does not exist in that heart which is controlled and disciplined to the reasonable rigors of fast and abstinence.

There is a fear, finally, that full with food and heavy with sleep, we may forget that the Lord of the Heavenly Harvest, who multiplied bread, who dined with publicans and sinners, the Lord who changed water into wine that men might feast—that same Lord fasted in the time of fast; He taught us to feast and taught us to fast; and

how; and when; and where, as much akin to the reasons which any reader of the Scriptures knows. Americans have today who grit their teeth and say: "We can win upon Him, He invited us to imitate this fight. We can help a lot, if Himself: "If any man will come we hunger a little."

after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (*Luke 9: 23*). He took up His Cross, and on that Cross He died to save us on the sixth day of the week, Friday. And for fear that selfish, sinful, fattened men and women will forget that Lord, that Cross, that Friday when true freedom was born, a wise Mother, with tears and remembrance, tells her children to restrain themselves and think, and give thanks and pray. That is why Catholics do not eat meat on Friday.

These thoughts may help you to beef less, if I may use a colloquialism, about your little bit of beef; to kick less, to use another, with fewer shoes; to cover more ground in the road to victory with less gasoline.

These reasons are not hard to understand. They are very noble reasons which the Church has for her rationing plan. They are very

These thoughts may help Americans who are now beginning to remember God; these thoughts may help the country which is now in the way to triumph—a country of strong, and lean, and self-sacrificing people; these thoughts may help us all to realize that the wise Mother—our Church—has been leading the way for a long, long time.

## LIFE IS ALL LEND-LEASE

(Talk given on November 14, 1943)

Lend-lease has long arms. To nearly every phase of life in the lands to which lend-lease has been extended, something new has been added. We need not complain about that. America has lent and leased out of its abundance that the world may be free from present-day evils.

The great program of lend-lease, however, has had a necessary effect on nearly every walk of American life, down to the smallest details. For example: last week I was asked to telephone a new Red Cross Worker at seven-fifteen the next morning. I finish Mass each day before seven, so it's no problem to be on speaking terms with the world at seven-fifteen. But the Red Cross worker had no alarm clock. Her father had no alarm clock. Nor her mother. Between them, they could not buy or borrow an alarm clock. Well, for Thursday, November 11th, at least, I was acting alarm clock. Some one across the sea is probably using an alarm clock which she might have bought.

Do not misunderstand. I am not saying this in any spirit of bitterness. The point is that the American people have gladly emptied

to their pockets, their bread baskets, and their piggy banks. They have given up their cars and they walk to work; they hunt and peck on ricketty typewriters; their radio sets are without batteries. Guns, gadgets, destroyers, shells, shoes, tanks, toothbrushes; men and women and food and money; anything, everything which can be of use directly and indirectly in the great war effort is shipped to those places where they will do the most good. The European knows it. He counts on it. The American knows it, too. He is happy about it. He is paying for it. He does not rejoice in the necessity for it. But, in the emergency, he is happy to give and to serve.

The American is grateful in many ways to the other United Nations for the sacrifices which have been made for a cause which must benefit America. By the same token, the European should be grateful to the American for the sacrifices which he is making. There is an obligation of mutual gratitude. There is much to be said on both sides and there is much to be thankful for—and on both sides. But it would be a pretty mess if no one on either side of

the lend-lease transaction were been blessed. Our healthy bodies thankful. —and we have the healthiest bodies

Consider the possibility. Suppose that the Russians, the British, and the French not only refused to be thankful to us, but even denied that there was any obligation to be grateful. Suppose that, further, they paid no attention to us after the war and just considered us beneath their notice. That would be the unkind cut. That is almost unthinkable. That would live in infamy. We certainly do not deserve such treatment—or do we?

Americans have stocked the arsenal of democracy with all the instruments of health and power. They have lavished its treasures and its stores upon the needy and the beleaguered all over the world. But the same Americans have been blessed and protected for many generations by light and grace, by the armor of the Faith. An omnipotent Hand has kept us in its palm. But how and when, on any old day, does the average American remember to thank the mighty fortress which is our God?

Life is a stewardship for God. It is the original and the fundamental lend-lease. The good things of this world have been extended to us—on loan. And we are blessed with them as no other people has

ies in the world—have been leased to us and tenanted by our immortal souls. We have the light of liberty, born out of the belief in God which our founding fathers professed. We have the horn of plenty, filled by the generous bounty of our Creator. All these things are not intrinsically ours. The day will come on which we shall have to render an account of our stewardship, for then we can be stewards no longer. On that day loan and lease will reach their terms. But meanwhile are we grateful?

Thanksgiving Day is very soon. But I am not talking about that day. I am rather talking about this day, and about every day like it. Are we grateful today? About 75,000,000 Americans certainly give no evidence of gratitude, this morning. They may be grateful, but there is no evidence.

What kind of evidence do I want? The kind of evidence which our Lord suggests in the Gospel of this morning. "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God, the things that are God's" (*Matthew 22: 21*).

We call today the Lord's Day. Why not give it to Him?

The Catholic Church is very anxious about the evidence of gratitude. The Church remembers the ancient Law which Moses received from God and which he gave to the Jews; the very reasonable and fundamental Ten Commandments. The third commandment reads:

“Remember that thou keep holy the sabbath day. Six days thou shalt labour, and shalt do all thy works. But on the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: thou shalt do no work on it, thou nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy beast, nor the stranger that is within thy gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all things that are in them, and rested on the seventh day: therefore the Lord blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it” (*Exodus* 20: 8-11).

The Church remembers the care and the common sense which always marked the conduct of our Lord on the Sabbath. He entered the temple or the synagogue on that day. He kept the Sabbath. But He also scorned the Pharisees who strained their gnats about the observance of it. He mentioned cases to them in which the law of Sabbath might be relented; for example, if an ox fell into a pit on the Sabbath day, one could pull it out immediately. But the Catholic Church also recalls His demand

that God be given what is His. And so, in keeping with this sound reasoning and with the commands found in the Bible, the Church has formulated a precept which may be found in the Code of Canon Law:

On holy days of obligation Mass must be heard and one must abstain from servile work and from judicial proceedings; also, unless legitimate custom or special indulgences make an exception, from public markets, fairs and other public buying and selling (*C. J. C.* 1248).

Why has the Church promulgated this precept? So that men and women will not forget the words: “Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day;” so that men and women will not forget to render unto God what is His; so that men and women will not forget that all life is a lend-lease proposition; so that men and women will not forget to thank God for all that comes from Him; so that men and women will not forget that the worship of God must be practised not at convenience and whim and pleasure, but in God’s way, in His place, and in His time; so that men and women will not forget that when our Lord instituted the sacrifice of the Mass the night before He died, He said “Do this in commemoration of me.” That is why Catholics go to Mass on Sunday.

Do men and women forget?

What about the 75,000,000 who are forgetful this very morning? What about the Catholics who are not going to Mass today? Some do not remember. They are forgetful! Some remember and do not attend Mass anyway. They are ungrateful!

There is nothing difficult about the Law of Sunday observance. It binds all Catholics who are seven years or older. But all who would suffer a grave inconvenience by attendance are by that very fact excused. Mothers who must themselves care for children cannot be in two places at the same time. They are excused from Mass in such a case. Workers who are not allowed to take time out for Mass are excused. Invalids are excused. A light reason is not sufficient to excuse one from a grave obligation; but there are many grave reasons, too—and the Church understands them. There is nothing difficult about the Law.

Now, I realize that it is almost comical to preach in church to the people who are present about the gross negligence of the people who are absent. It is ridiculous to expect people who are absent to react favorably to words which they do not hear. But this is not such a case. And to all Catholics, I would say, I hope you have all been to

Mass today, or that you are going to Mass, for your attendance at Mass is much more important than any word of mine. Your presence at Mass is your acknowledgment of belief in God; it is your pledge of remembrance that Christ died for you; it is your public expression of gratitude for the good things which God has lent to you and leased to you.

What is the effect of the Catholic precept upon you who are not of the Catholic Church? There is no effect at all. The Catholic law is for Catholics. The divine law, however, as expressed through Moses, is for everybody. "Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day." That law is for you. The Catholic Church does not legislate for non-Catholics any more than New Jersey legislates for New Yorkers. But it is the constant hope of the Church, and of every sincere Catholic in it, that everyone who is not in it, will be helped by our constant Catholic prayer that there be but one fold and one shepherd; one Lord, one faith, one baptism. It is our prayer that you will always do your duty, and render to the Lord for all that He has rendered to you; that you will rejoice in the Lord; that you will adore Him, and thank Him, and pray to Him—the Lord our God, our Help in ages

past, our staff and strength in you out to the ball game, *after* stormy days, our glory in eternity church.  
to come.

Some can always arrange the schedule to allow the maid her day off. (And woe betide the employer who refuses to do that, for maids are hard to get.) But they cannot arrange to give God one hour. Some can arrange without fail to hear a favorite radio program, but they just can't manage to get to Mass and to hear the word of God. How ungrateful they are!

But others are always faithful, always observant, always provident about paying their debts to God. For them there is no *must* in the law. It is a privilege and a pleasure to return thanks to God. For them there is no blue law. They can take in a movie; they can take

These are the people who are placing their country and its high purposes in the hands of God. Some of these people—Catholics—do not feel that they do enough just to go to Mass on Sunday, so they go every day to the divine sacrifice; not because they must go but because they wish to go and be filled with the light and grace of the Savior.

The law of the Church does not bind them to daily Mass. But there they are, praying for us, for our needs, for our health and safety. This is their reverse lend-lease. And may God give them credit. May God hear their prayers. May God give us all the sense of gratitude to Him; may He give us faith and peace.



# MARRIAGE LASTS FOR THE DURATION—OF LIFE

(Talk given on November 21, 1943)

This morning I want to take you to a wedding—a wedding complete with a lovely bride, a handsome groom, orange blossoms, and all the other things that usually accompany such festive occasions.

The church is decorated with flowers, and the friends of the bride and groom fill the pews.

Yes, weddings are usually beautiful, glamorous functions. But there is more to them than just these trimmings. Weddings are serious things, too—and that is what the Church thinks about them. She expresses her teachings about marriage in the words used at the ceremony.

Let me describe it to you briefly.

The bride and groom are kneeling in front of the altar, and the priest, attired in his vestments, gives the young man and woman some good advice—advice which the Church gives to everybody who is about to be married. It goes like this:

My dear friends: you are about to enter into a union which is most sacred and most serious. It is most sacred, because it is established by God Himself; most serious because it will bind you together for life in a relationship so close and so intimate that it will profoundly affect your whole

future. That future, with its hopes and disappointments, its successes and its failures, its pleasures and its pains, its joys and its sorrows, is hidden from your eyes.

You know that these elements are mingled in every life, and are to be expected in your own. And so, not knowing what is before you, you take each other for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, until death.

Truly, then, these words are most serious. It is a beautiful tribute to your undoubted faith in each other, that, recognizing their full import, you are nevertheless so willing and ready to pronounce them. And because these words involve such solemn obligations, it is most fitting that you rest the security of your wedded life upon the great principle of self-sacrifice.

And so you begin your married life by the voluntary and complete surrender of your individual lives in the interest of that deeper and wider life which you are to have in common. Henceforth you will belong entirely to each other. You will be one in mind, one in heart, one in affections. And whatever sacrifices you may be hereafter required to make, always make them generously. Sacrifice is usually difficult and irksome. Only love can make it easy; and perfect love can make it a joy.

No greater blessing can come to your married life than pure

conjugal love, loyal and true to the end. May, then, this love with which you join your hands and hearts today, never fail, but grow deeper and stronger as the years go on. Nor will God be wanting to your needs; He will pledge you the life-long support of His graces in the Holy Sacrament which you are about to receive.

This admonition expresses very well the teaching of the Church about matrimony. The priest is the official representative, the official witness, of the Church and he makes certain that the contracting parties understand, *before* they enter into the contract, just what that contract entails. You will note that the entire spirit of his advice is centered about the idea of sacrificial love, not selfish love. Matrimony does not consist of vying in selfishness, but rather of vying in generosity toward one another.

The two contracting parties—I realize that it may sound unromantic to call the loving couple “two contracting parties,” but that is what they are—the two contracting parties then proceed to give consent to the contract which forms the union.

Let us suppose that they are John and Mary. The priest asks the bridegroom the following question: “John, wilt thou take Mary here present for thy lawful wife,

according to the rite of our Holy mother, the Church?”

John replies: “I will.”

The priest then asks the bride: “Mary, wilt thou take John here present for thy lawful husband, according to the rite of our holy mother, the Church?”

Mary replies: “I will.”

Notice, please, that there is mutual consent. It takes two to make a marriage.

At the direction of the priest, they join their right hands. The bridegroom repeats after the priest the following pledge: “I, John, take thee, Mary, for my lawful wife, to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, until death do us part.”

The bride then repeats the same pledge: “I, Mary, take thee, John, for my lawful husband, to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, until death do us part.”

Notice, here, that bride and groom have stated the terms of the contract. They are very weighty terms: to have and to hold; from now on; in goodness or badness; in riches or in poverty; in good health and bad health; until death.

The priest then speaks officially.

for the Church in her official language: "I join you together in marriage. In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen." He makes the sign of the Cross over them and sprinkles them with holy water.

Next, the ring is produced and the priest blesses it with words which are translated as follows: "Let us pray. Bless, O Lord, this ring which we bless in Thy Name, that she who is to wear it, keeping true faith unto her husband, may abide in Thy peace and obedience to Thy will, and ever live in mutual love. Through Christ our Lord. Amen."

When the ring has been sprinkled with holy water, the groom places it on the finger of the bride, saying: "With this ring I thee wed and I plight unto thee my troth."

The priest says: "In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen."

Finally he prays for the couple: "Look down, we beseech Thee, O Lord, upon these Thy servants, and graciously protect Thy institution whereby Thou hast provided for the propagation of mankind; that those who are joined together by Thine authority may be preserved by Thy help. Through Christ our Lord. Amen."

Thus the ceremony is completed. There may follow the Nuptial Mass, which, for Catholics, is the proper solemnity of the marriage, although it is not essential. The essential ceremony has been described for you.

Do you miss anything in the words of the ceremony? Of course you miss something. There is no mention of "love, honor, and obey." Right you are. There is no "love, honor, and obey" in the terms of the marriage, according to the rite of the Catholic Church. These words are not in the terms of the contract. They are understood. If a man and woman do not intend to love, honor, and obey, they should not enter into the contract. There can be no good faith in a contract of any kind if fidelity to its terms is not presupposed. The idea of the Church, moreover, is that love, honor, and obedience, should be mutual, not one-sided. There are as many things in married life which call for obedience on the part of the husband, as there are things which call for obedience on the part of the wife. For example, when the babies come, there must be obedience to the routine of feeding and the preparation of formulas. Ask any married people—they could cite many other instances.

The entire ceremony is quite in accord with the teaching which the Church has always expressed about marriage. It is a divine institution. It is the expression of the deepest and most common instinct which God has placed in the human being; the instinct to form a society. The domestic society, which is formed by marriage, answers the bodily and spiritual needs of both sexes and their offspring. The contract of marriage depends upon the human will, the free will of the contracting parties. Without freedom of consent there can be no contract. But it is important to remember that the nature of marriage does not depend upon the human will. Man and woman are not free to make of marriage what they will, but they must abide by the natural and divine law. The obligations and privileges of marriage, which are freely given and accepted in the contract, are of divine making. And they must be treated as such.

There are three principal benefits to be derived from marriage. The first is the good of the offspring which naturally follow as the effect of marriage. The second is the good of the partners in marriage. The third is the good of the union itself. The first good implies that there should be child-

ren and that they should be cared for properly. The second good implies that honor and fidelity, love and sacrifice, be uppermost in the minds of husband and wife. The third good demands that society in general, the Church, the State, and everyone, give to the married union the respect which its dignity deserves.

With these facts in mind, it is not difficult to understand why the Church thinks more highly of the married state—your state, perhaps—than of any other human institution. You see why the Church reiterates so often the words of Jesus: “What . . . . God hath joined together, let not man put asunder” (*Mark* 10: 9). You can understand why the Church condemns divorce. Divorce is ruled out by the terms of the contract. Remember what they are: “From this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, until death do us part.”

Another point is very significant in the Catholic marriage ceremony. The priest more than once mentions the Name of God. In that holy Name, the two are joined. In that holy Name, the ring is blessed. In that holy Name, the groom plights his troth. This should indicate that marriage is not just a private affair; a private contract

between two private persons. No. fore, the careful regulation of marriage by the Church for her Catholic people. Every effort is made that it be publicly witnessed and to instruct them. Every effort is publicly registered. But the Church made to protect them, even against their own mistakes. The Church than that. The Church considers is not strict about it. The Church marriage a contract made between is merely reasonable and consistent man and woman AND God. She about it. The entire purpose of the knows that Christ Himself dignified that contract by making it a kind in this world and in the next; sacrament, so that the very contract becomes a sign or cause of your well-being and the well-being of your children, who are not only God's choicest graces. your children, but God's children,

I hope that we understand, there- too.

## THE HEALING HAND

(Talk given on November 28, 1943)

How often one sees in the news photos the picture of the priest with stole upon his shoulders, kneeling beside the victim of an accident. How often, in the news of a major catastrophe—as, for example, the terrible fire in Boston, a year ago—one reads that priests from the neighboring parishes came to minister to the dying. We take these items for granted, for somehow we understand that the priest is expected to be present; he should be there. Many times in the dark hours of night one will see the priest hurrying to some quiet part of town. Or during the day he will be seen hastily taking a taxi to a nearby hospital. Why? Because some one is ill, some one is in danger, and he has been summoned to do his Christ-like duty; to heal the sick by his spiritual ministrations, or to speed the departing soul to the heaven of God.

The priest could tell you some thrilling stories about his sick calls. He could bring you to the mansion of the millionaire. He could bring you to the hovel of the pauper. He could take you through the wards of the great metropolitan hospitals. He could take you for dramatic rides in ambulances, in police cru-

isers, to places where sudden death has visited; to fires, to floods, to scenes of carnage, of murder, and of suicide. He could bring you to the death-bed of the saint; he could lift your hair with tales of death-bed repentance, of justice achieved in a last moment where there wasn't a minute to lose. But he doesn't tell you much about these things.

Why is it that you do not hear very much about the sick calls of the priest?

The chief reason is that most of the details which would interest others are not the business of others. They are the business of the person who calls the priest; the business of the priest who is called; the business of God in whose Name he is called. But one thing is certain. You know he is there where he is needed. And you expect him to be there.

Why is the priest on the scene? First of all he is bound by the law of the Church, in virtue of his office, to minister for the sick in his parish with sedulous care and abundant charity, especially those who are in danger of death. He must bring them the sacraments and commend their souls to God.

It is not a matter of choice with him. It is a matter of serious obligation. Were he not obliged under the law, he would be obliged by the requirements of charity, even as you are, to do what he can for those in need.

When it is a matter of life and death, no one hesitates to do what he can. Life and death! Life and death! We hear the police sirens and fire equipment racing through the streets and we know to what lengths the public protective services will go at such a time. Life and death! We know how many ships and planes will be sent over the wide ocean to save the lives of a few in a rubber raft. Life and death! The blood banks and the plasma, the ambulances and the hospital trains, the hospitals and the stores of medicine, all these tell us how important it is to preserve life, to minister to the sick, to give them all we have to help. This is humanity. This is Christianity. This is a duty to man and to God who made him. And in this duty we expect the minister of God, the priest, to be first in line. And he is.

What does the priest do when he is called? When the sick-bed is in tranquil surroundings, he enters the house and utters the words of our Lord: "Peace be to this house and to all who dwell therein." Then he prays for the invalid and for the others there. If the patient wishes to and can make a confession, the sacrament of penance is administered; that is, the priest, alone and quietly, hears the sins of the penitent, prescribes a fitting penance which usually involves the recitation of some prayers, gives absolution, and, as a result, brings peace to the troubled conscience. That is a blessing which, it seems, no one else can bring. Then, if it be possible, the priest administers the Holy Eucharist; that is, the patient is given Holy Communion, the Body and Blood of our Lord under the appearance of bread. If there be danger of death, the sacrament of Extreme Unction is then given. The priest anoints the five organs of sense with the consecrated oil of the sick, and prays that God may forgive the sins which have been committed. During it all, he prays that God's grace may be showered upon his servant here that, in recovery or in death, he may find peace and refreshment, justice and strength.

If there be a recovery of health, the priest has done his work and is grateful for his privilege. If there be no recovery and death finds its way to that bed-side, the priest must be there to send the depart-

ing soul to its Maker, to call upon the angels and saints of God to come forth to meet the newcomer and welcome him to the heavenly city. And after death it is his responsibility to perform the solemn rites of the dead in which there is so much of consolation and of hope.

This is the duty of the priest, so little dramatized, so much misunderstood, and sometimes, unfortunately, misrepresented by uninformed writers and speakers. They know little of the 24-hour responsibility which the Catholic priest bears. They know little of the distracted days and sleepless nights which are sometimes his lot. They know little of the sorrows and woes which the priest accepts as his secret so that the suffering soul may be relieved. They know very little; and what he knows, they will never know.

To this sublime office the Church directs her priest. Why? Simply because the Church, following the example of her divine Founder, has a care for the sick. Christ healed and saved. He never faced infirmity without curing it, just as He never faced sorrow without forgiving sin. He charged the first members of His Church with His own mission. "As the Father hath sent me," He said, "I also send

you" (*John* 20: 21). The Church is conscious of her mission. She has an abiding care of the sick.

There is a serious charge often leveled against the Church, however, by those who do not understand. The charge is that, while much time and effort is given to the spiritual alleviation of the suffering, very little is done to take care of the physical causes of suffering. It may seem that way to some, but the facts belie the accusation. The Church is often indicted for her apparent lack of social work. There are many Catholics who feel ashamed of that indictment and they do not know how to defend themselves, because they do not know the facts. There are many non-Catholics who are friendly enough to the Catholic Church but seem to find her derelict in her duty to suffering humanity. But what are the facts?

In the United States today there are 726 Catholic hospitals conducted by the heroic orders of religious, men and women, for the alleviation of suffering, for its prevention and cure. These are chiefly staffed by persons who take no salary whatever. Seven hundred and twenty-six are a lot of hospitals. And these do not represent the numerous religious congregations which exist



for the nursing of the sick poor. This is the Catholic Church working among the poor. This is the Church among the sick.

There are in the United States 183 homes for the aged conducted by the Little Sisters of the Poor and other wonderful groups of sisters. These existed long before any one talked of old-age pensions and social security. And money cannot buy the services which these courageous women give and to which they have dedicated, not their working hours, not a portion of their time, but their whole lives. They are the Catholic Church working for the aged.

There are in the United States 316 orphanages conducted by the Catholic Sisters and Brothers. And these existed long before the civil legislatures began to worry about juvenile delinquency. These are the Girl-towns and Boy-towns which people take for granted. These are the production plants in which men and women labor who love God and His creatures to the extent of laying down their lives for the little ones. These people are the Catholic Church laboring for the future of America.

There are in the United States 181 offices of Catholic Charities, conducted under the supervision of the diocesan heads, for the prevention and alleviation of poverty.

Hospitals, foundling asylums, orphanages, homes for the aged, day-nurseries, refuges for the wayward and the incurable, schools for social service—all these represent the Church's mission to care for the needy. This is the material side of her work. This is the healing hand of the mystical body of Christ. May it never be withdrawn!

I think it is safe to say that no other organization in the country, including the Federal government itself, can count as many institutions for the alleviation of human suffering, human dependency, and human need, as the 1406 which have just been listed. And there are hundreds more.

This is the Catholic offering for spiritual, physical, and national security. I do not present it to you in any spirit of boastfulness and pride. Rather I am regretful that they are not even more numerous and more effective than they are. But I do present them to you as living evidence that the Church is interested not only in the spiritual welfare of her children, but also in their physical welfare—and she would like to count you all her children as you are God's children. While her chief and ultimate in-

terest is the salvation of souls, she cannot neglect the salvation of bodies, too.

Since the very beginning of Christianity, it has been the work of the priest to cure souls. Since the very beginning it has been the work of Catholics to cure bodies. That is why the Church invented the hospital many centuries ago. That is why there are countless orders of men and women dedicated to such tasks. That is why the Church honors saints like Cather-

ine of Siena, and Ursula and Camillus (who first wore the Red Cross on the battlefield), and John of God, and Vincent de Paul and Don Bosco. That is why, in their footsteps and with their Christ-like spirit, the priest goes to the bed-side, to the fire, to the accident, and to the battle-field, to cure the body for this life, and to cure the soul for this life and the next—where there is no sorrow or sickness, but endless happiness of body and soul for those who love God.

## CONSULTING THE EXPERTS

(Talk given on December 5, 1943)

The great meeting of the Allied leaders at Cairo and Teheran was something more than a meeting of the Big Four. Each of the leaders—Roosevelt, Churchill, Chiang Kai Shek, and Stalin—was accompanied by very important people. The military and naval commanders were there. Each nation was represented by a large staff. The personnel included men to whom the leaders could turn at any moment and ask for expert advice. The leaders could not talk wildly about future campaigns either in the Pacific or in Europe without detailed information and sound advice. In other words, they could not get very far without the help of technical experts.

If you are sick, you go to a doctor. He is an expert in bodily ills. He may judge that your ailment might be the better treated if you were sent to a medical man who has specialized in disorders of a specific type. He sends you to a specialist, then. The specialist is a technical expert. You are very grateful that you can consult him. And you place yourself in his expert hands.

Uncle Sam, a few years ago, was faced with the problem of getting ready for war, and quickly. The instruments of war—necessary high explosives, petroleum, rubber, concentrates of food, and innumerable other supplies—had to be produced and made available. The country turned to experts. The supplies produced had to be shipped to vital points. The country called in the experts. They have done a pretty good job.

The man who is confronted with a legal puzzle sends for his expert, his lawyer. This expert may be stumped in the case, let us say,

by a tax problem. He consults one who is familiar with the technicalities of legal taxation, in other words with one who is even more a technical expert than he is.

This is the age of the specialists. The complications of life have made them necessary. No one of us can know all the angles, as the expression goes. We are constantly in need of the man who knows the particular angle in which our situation grows acute. We would be foolish to rush into a problem blindly without the best advice. So we tread the ground carefully and feel our way as we go ahead under the guidance of the expert.

It is only reasonable that we apply the same principles of wisdom and caution to our personal conduct. In everything which we do or can do, we can be right or wrong. But we do not always know what is right and what is wrong. We are in a quandary, sometimes, and we do not know what to do. The obvious thing is consultation with some one who knows. But who does know? We shall find out.

We would hardly worry about right and wrong, of course, unless we were fairly certain that there is a law of right and wrong. There is. But some people do not think so. A few years ago I attended a dinner at which several experts

in community planning gave some interesting talks. The future of children was discussed by two educators. When the audience was invited to offer questions for any one of the speakers to answer, I asked this one: "Are we teaching our children the difference between right and wrong?" There was a pause. Then the lady who acted as toastmaster asked me: "Which of the speakers would you like to answer that question?" I said: "Any or all the speakers?" The lady, who is a highly paid teacher of economics in a great State University, replied: "I do not think any of the speakers can answer that question until we take a vote and determine, by will of the majority, just what is right and what is wrong." That ended the discussion, so far as she was concerned. But it cannot end the discussion for you and me.

Can stealing be made right by popular vote? Or was it always wrong to steal? Can murder be made right by popular vote? Or was it always wrong to murder? Would it be quite right and moral and proper to stage a rape of Paris, like the rape of Nanking, if every one voted for it? Or are you and I agreed that always and ever there has been a universal moral law by which justice and honesty and fi-

delity and the high virtues are right; a universal moral law by which injustice, dishonesty, infidelity, and other associated vices and crimes are wrong? I think we are all agreed upon that.

Who made that law? Why, the only One who could make such a law, the Maker of all mankind. He made us that way. We cannot live properly unless there be right and wrong—not right and wrong because we make things right or wrong, but because there was a right and a wrong before we were made. God is the Law-giver and we must follow His law.

Every law which man makes should be made according to that eternal Law of God as it is made known to us by revelation and right reason. Our laws are made because we wish to protect that supreme law. Otherwise our laws would be unjust.

But, you may say, how is one to know just how that supreme law might apply to this or that case? I can only reply that one, of himself, cannot always know, because he cannot possibly see, always, the multiple ramifications of the moral law. Well, what is one to do? I answer that he should do what any one would do in a legal tangle. He consults an expert. The lawyer

may bring the matter to the highest court in the land, hoping for a right decision. Sometimes that may not be necessary. He may be able to give you an answer more readily than that about the application of the civil law. He is an expert.

In like manner, when one is puzzled by a problem of moral conduct, one should go to an expert who has studied the moral law, the divine Law; one who has studied the applications of the law of morality in the myriad changes of human conduct, one who has for his specialty the right and reasonable understanding of how God wants us to act in this or that case. In our moral problems we can go to one whose business it is to set us right. We can go to one who will teach us about truth and falsehood, about right and wrong; an accredited teacher who has authority to teach. We can go to one who knows the law and who has authority to judge the morality of what we have done or what we propose to do; a judge whose judgment must be just. We can go to one who will heal the wounds of care and guilt, a physician who can reduce the fever of passion and temptation, a specialist who can diagnose our moral condition as sound or symptomatic of evil, a technical expert in justice and goodness who can tell us how

better to regain our spiritual health. We can go to one, finally, who is not working for a fee, who is not expectant of rewards, who is deeply interested in our personal welfare, as a father is interested in the happiness of his child. We can go to one who derives his title, "Father," from that fact. We can go to a priest. That, frankly, is what I do. And that is what you can do.

You will understand, from this, why the Church administers, through her priests, the sacrament of penance. The Church does not want to hear the sins of people just to hear the sins of people. The Church does not want to hear about sins at all, any more than a good doctor wants to see all his friends sick in bed, or a good undertaker wants everybody to die. But the Church, in the sacrament of penance, wants to correct moral illness; the Church wants to judge moral wrong; the Church wants to guide toward justice; the Church wants to console and encourage; the Church wants to protect from corruption and cherish in goodness, all those who are in danger of sin. That is why there is a sacrament of penance. It is the judgment seat of right and wrong. It is the laboratory of moral health. It is the arm-chair of a quiet interested

father. It is the consulting room of the technical expert.

Now, I can hear some one say: "Why should I tell my sins to any man?" Well, that isn't the point. Why should you tell your legal troubles to any man, or your physical troubles to any man, like a lawyer or a doctor? That is not the point either. The point is that there can be legal troubles and wrongs; there can be trouble and disorder in health; so we go to the experts for advice. The point is that there can be, there is moral trouble; moral wrong; moral injustice; moral turpitude. There is a way to correct; there is a way to cure; there is a way of recovery. And there are experts in these matters who can guide, and advise, and cure. But they cannot judge and diagnose, they cannot heal and cure and advise, unless they know the case. That is why we tell them, that is why we confess to them. And the confession is just part of the process.

Our confession is useless unless we regret, unless we are sorry for, our sinful condition; our confession is a mockery and a sacrilege unless we tell the true state of our soul; our confession is just a waste of time unless we desire to get better and to avoid the causes of moral disease; our consultation is point-

less unless we take the doctor's medicine and follow his advice. All this means, in the sacramental sphere, that we must have sorrow, we must confess our sins, we must accept the judgment, the advice, the penance of the consulting expert, who is the priest; and we must have the firm purpose of avoiding the occasions of evil, and evil itself.

But, by what right does the priest exercise this almighty function? I answer that the power and the right was given to the Apostles and their successors by Christ, our Lord, who said to them: "Peace be to you. As the Father hath sent me, I also send you. Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained" (*John* 20: 21-23). The priest's mission, under the jurisdiction of the Church, is the mission of Christ to judge sin, to instruct in goodness, to heal the wounds of the soul, and, what is the prerogative of divinity, to forgive.

So the Church educates the priesthood. She demands of priests a preparation and a training far more intensive than that which is necessary to become a physician, a lawyer, a chemist, or an engineer. The future priest is subjected to

a discipline in morality which has no equal in the whole wide world. He is trained in the wisdom of the world's oldest teacher—the Church. It is his specific business to know the Faith, and the Moral which follows from the Faith. It is his responsibility to give technical advice in justice and right, in duty and obligation, in good order of human conduct. It is his official task to represent Christ and His Church in the tribunal of penance. Others may give technical advice on matters of property, health, politics, public relations, military tactics, or engineering. The priest is the technical expert in right and wrong.

His power is even more wonderful than that. He deals with professional confidence in the secrets of human character. He is bound, in spite of death itself, to the seal of secrecy. He is empowered by our loving Master to grant mercy and forgiveness to those who seek mercy and forgiveness. That is why he is a priest. It is his work to heal the ailing soul, to quiet the troubled conscience. It is his work to make the crooked straight and the rough ways plain. That is why there is a Church. That is why there is a priesthood. That is why there is penance, the sacrament of wisdom and mercy.

## REPENTANCE

(Talk given on December 12, 1943)

In the middle of the Fifth Century there was an important meeting of eight bishops in the town of Antioch. They convened one day on the porch of the basilica, a spot which was comfortable and commanded a view of the nearby street. Deep in the agenda of the meeting, they were interrupted by the sound of a parade. A group of men and women tripped along the street. In the center was the most notorious woman in all Antioch. In an age when acting was hardly an art, but a sinful craft, she was Antioch's leading actress. She was the premiere danseuse of Antioch when dancing was not—even the best of it—as respectable as it is today. She was notoriously bad. The people called her Margarita.

She rode on a well-groomed donkey, with many fantastic graces, as the old chronicle states. She was decked out from head to foot with pearls and gold and precious stones. Her splendid train of followers was richly dressed. In the words of the old chronicle they surrounded her, "of whose beauty and loveliness there could be no wearying in a world of men."

When the eight bishops saw her, riding by so shamelessly and bare

of limb and head and shoulder, they groaned and, as from a great, a grievous sin, turned their heads away. That is, all but one.

His name was Nonnus of Tabenna, "a man marvellously great and a mighty monk, with great learning and greater in simplicity and humility." He did a strange thing for a bishop. He regarded her long and intently. After she had passed by, his eyes still followed her. Then he turned to the bishops there around him.

"Did not," he said, "the sight of such great beauty delight you?"

They answered not a word. They didn't know what to say. That was a strange question for a bishop! Nonnus bowed his head and surprising tears fell from him upon the good book in his hands. "Did not the sight of her great beauty delight you?", he asked again.

Again they said nothing. Then he, with a gravity which repelled all suspicion, said: "Verily, it greatly delighted me, and well pleased was I with her beauty! That beauty God shall set before us in His judgment that we may compare it with our own. For she has made her vows to the devil, and she keeps



them, and with sinful fidelity. But we have made our vows to the Omnipotent God and we permit our sloth to break them. How many hours has she spent in her chamber, dressing and adorning and making herself lovely to the eyes of men, while we have spent but little time in our prayers and devotions and penance, making ourselves welcome to the sight of the angels of God. May the Lord Christ be merciful to us that this woman's adornment has exceeded the adornment of our immortal souls. She has promised to please men, and she has kept her sinful word. We have promised to please God, and through our laziness, we have died. Did not the sight of such great beauty delight you? Well, verily it delighted me."

This was the great charity with which he said his prayer that night and for shame of his own unworthiness he slept fitfully and dreamed much. In his dream he was standing in the church at Antioch during a ceremony. Suddenly a great black dove flew towards his head and worried him with its wings, which were squalid and smelled of filth. Again and again the dove harried him, until he siezed it and plunged it into the holy water. There it floundered a moment and rose, leaving all its filth in the holy

water, and it flew away as white as snow.

The good man worried about that dream until the next day when he preached to the faithful in the very same church. There he spoke, the chronicle says, "with no alloy of artifice or philosophy, nothing of human vanity; but full of the Holy Spirit, he reasoned with them, speaking from his heart of the judgment to come and the eternal blessedness that is in store."

Now it happened that, by the compassion of God, into the church came Margarita, who had never been inside a church before. She heard his words and gave them thought and, without any control of her tears, she fell to weeping and despair. It was an unexpected thing, but it happened.

Later that day the bishop Nonnus received a message from Margarita, in which she requested to see him, so that, through him, she might come to Christ, who came upon earth to save sinners, who did not disdain to draw near to the publican. The astonished bishop replied: "I am only a sinner, serving God. Come to us, and in the presence of all the bishops, I will speak to you."

Next day, with no waste of time, the woman came to them—the eight bishops—in the basilica. At the

feet of the good Nonnus she knelt and this is what she said:

“My Lord, I pray thee to follow thy Master, the Lord Christ, and shed on me thy kindness and make me a Christian. My Lord, I am a sea of wickedness and an abyss of evil. I ask to be baptized.”

When Nonnus had persuaded her to rise from the ground, he told her that the rules of the Church provided that a public sinner could not be baptized unless there was given some assurance of sincerity and fidelity. But her demands were so simple, so humble, so repentant, that they agreed to make an exception and baptize her. She was given to the care of a good matron named Romana. When the time came to confess her sins, she did so. When asked what name she chose with which to be christened, she admitted that her parents had called her Pelagia, but that she had earned the name Margarita because the men of Antioch had commonly given her gifts of pearls. (Margarita means “pearl.”) So she became Pelagia and, with that name, she set about the task of learning the truths of the Church and the religious practice of Christians. All the gold and wealth which she had was given to the Church for the poor. All her old haunts and old friends were forsaken. Pelagia

turned traitor on Satan. Her old vows to him were broken. Her new life began, but not without many a wrench of heart, not without many a temptation.

Eight days after her baptism, she left Antioch and never returned.

A few years later in a quiet hermitage on the Mount of Olives near Jerusalem a hermit died. He had been known as Pelagius; and very few, but the ministers of religion, had known him at all. When the neighboring monks came to prepare the body for burial, they found with astonishment that this was the body of a woman, not a man. Yes; it was a woman whose face had borrowed from majesty what had been given up to beauty. Some time later, she was identified by Nonnus as Pelagia, the penitent of Antioch.

That is the story of Margarita who kept her vows to God with such care, who adorned her soul with the bright symbols of virtue which cannot be cast off like the jewels of this world. That is the story of Pelagia, Saint Pelagia, who is venerated annually in the Oriental Churches on October 8th.

It is a great story, which deserves better telling than I have given it. The point is perfectly clear, however, to every one. The

point is that repentance is a wonderful thing. The point is that repentance is possible to every one, with the grace of God. The point is not that Margarita was praiseworthy because she was evil, any more than the publican was praiseworthy, in our Lord's parable, because he was a sinner. Margarita was, on the contrary, faithful to her evil way, more faithful indeed than other persons are to goodness. In this, good people might take example from sinners, making unto themselves friends of the mammon of iniquity, as Our Lord suggests. He meant, of course, that we should be as wise and prudent about doing good, as evil-doers are subtle and astute about doing evil.

The story of Saint Pelagia, like most other stories, has two sides to it. There is the side of the sinner and there is the side of the saint.

Approaching the story from the side of the sinner, we can conclude that there is a chance for every sinner to make a personal recovery act. There is a chance for every one to put off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. Pelagia was struck by the kindness of a preacher's word; she heard the sound of grace and she followed that sound; she saw the pearl of salvation, and of great price, and she sold all that she had to pos-

sess that pearl. She had the honesty and the humility to see herself through God's eyes. She was wrong and she had the courage to admit it. There was some good left in Pelagia; it was the good of honesty—she was a realist—in the face of truth; it was the good of courage—the brazen woman became the brave woman. If we can take Pelagia as a pattern of a bad individual, we can say that there is a little bit of good in every bad man or woman. We can say that if one will follow that little bit of good, there is no compelling reason why one should remain bad.

Approaching the story from the side of the saint, we must be struck by the interest of the holy Nonnus. He was a real democrat. His democracy was based on the principle that every one could be at least as good as he was. He had the democracy of the saint. (There are two kinds of democracy, according to Arnold Lunn; one good and true; the other bad and false. The saint says: You are as good as I am. The sinner says: I am as good as you are.) For the holy bishop, there was a lesson in the very evil of this woman, because her evil was dressed in beauty. His reaction to the sight of her was not: "I am holier than thou." His re-

action was: "I wish I were holier than I am."

Pelagia was pretty bad. But Nonnus was not interested in dwelling on that fact. His interest was to make her better. That he prayed for, and worked for, as we know from the story, and that he accomplished, by the grace of God.

There are lots of sinners in this world, who, perhaps, have never heard that there is more joy in heaven upon one sinner doing penance than upon ninety-nine just. There are lots of sinners in this world who could be repentant saints, if only those who are reputed to be good would give them a chance to recover. Repentance can-

not take place unless there be hope in the sinner's heart. Let us, who are supposed to be good, make known that hope.

This is the hope which the Church preaches and teaches by the sacrament of penance. This is the hope which breathes in the very life of the Church. This is the democratic hope which makes us all equal in our chance to keep our vows to God. It is this hope which is born of kindness to those less fortunate than ourselves. It is the hope which can turn sin into repentance and repentance into sanctity. If we can generate it, if we can spread it, the world will be a better place to live in.

## WE LEAD THE LITTLE CHILD

(Talk given on December 19, 1943)

When I was in college I often read a statement which was drawn in large letters on the wall of our academic hall. It read: "There is nothing more worthy of a man's ambition than that his son be the best of men." That statement made a deep impression on my mind. As years go by, the strength of it increases. It was true when Plato, great student of human affections, wrote it, twenty-three centuries ago. It is equally true today. There is great thought, great theology, great philosophy, implied in those words. They explain the reason why we are concerned about the future, about the peace, about the post-war world. We are concerned and we are worried. And we should be, because it is natural, it is worthy of us, to strive bravely for the welfare of our children. There is nothing more worthy of our ambition than their freedom from want, from fear, and from evil of any kind.

The parent is always ambitious for the child. Sometimes this is overdone. A father may be obsessed with the notion that his son must follow his own footsteps in his own profession, even though that be the worst job of all for

that particular child. A mother sometimes plans for a daughter to go to such a college, to marry such a man, to enter such or such an avenue of society, even though the girl may be temperamentally unfitted for any such thing. You and I know many cases of maladjustment which have been caused by parental ambition which is overweening. But these are exceptional cases. In the ordinary cases, the good parent plans well for the child. And there is nothing more worthy of careful planning.

The child cannot get along very well without parental help. You will hear some people say that they can do well without parents and you will hear examples cited of successful orphans. But we must remember that the asylum for orphans is a public admission that the empty place of the parent must be supplied by others, if the child's good is to be achieved. Whatever the exceptions, whatever the oddities of life may be, the fact is that the child needs both parents and the need is very great. That is the chief practical reason why the spiritual Mother, the Church, opposes the divorce of parents, for divorce of parents means the di-

voice of at least one parent, or both, from their natural offspring, the child, who is a primary responsibility of both father and mother.

The material advances which have been made in child psychology are not to be minimized in this connection. But no child psychology would be worth studying unless the psychologist treated the child somehow as a parent would treat the child. No teacher can achieve any success unless the child be taught somehow as a parent would teach, if the parent were able. No guidance can be effective in the child unless the elder guide assume, for the time, the love and the responsibility of the parent. All scientific ambition to make the child better is a parental ambition. And that is as it should be.

All these reflections, in which we are all agreed, point to the unassailable fact that the child is primarily the parent's job. The child cannot get along without the parent. The parent is naturally concerned about the child. And so he plans.

That children may live free from material want our mothers and fathers work and cook and clean and calculate for the future. That children may live free from the slavery of ignorance, our fath-

ers and mothers send us to proper schools. That children may live free from the pestilence of immorality, our fathers and mothers keep a vigilant eye on childhood associations, habits, and hobbies. That is the parental job. There is nothing more worthy.

The American father and mother are well aware of these responsibilities. They are like the fathers and mothers of every country. These facts need not be taught professionally. Everybody knows them. They are written in the human heart. They are history. They are life. Our present task is not to impress them on the American parent. But our present purpose is to protect the American parent and the American child against those tendencies and teachings which have for their result the separation of parent and child; a separation, total or partial, which makes it difficult for the child to obtain the help of his parents; a separation, total or partial, which denies to the parent the personal fulfillment of that great ambition of which Plato wrote: that his son be the best of men.

It is the great concern of adult America this very day that juvenile delinquency is growing, and growing rapidly. Just as the individual father and mother have for their

duty the protection of their own life and the parent another life; child against crime, the fathers and that can occur even under the and mothers of society have the same roof.

social, the national responsibility, of protecting American children against crime—against their own crimes, and against the crimes of others. It is a very urgent duty which faces us, because the evil of juvenile delinquency is very great, very widespread, and very significant.

It is our obvious course to search out the causes of this epidemic of juvenile delinquency. If you ask me what the causes are, I would say that all the causes can be reduced to one. It is this: The delinquent American child has lost his parents. He has been separated from them. Either they have been drawn away from the child by some extraneous influence; or they have themselves withdrawn from him; or he has been drawn away from them. In any case, there has been a separation. And that is the cause of the delinquency which now horrifies all Americans who think.

The separation of which I speak need not be, even though it often is, a severance of domestic relationships; that is, it need not mean that the child has one home and the parent another. The separation of which I speak is that which occurs when the child leads one

This is what I mean (you can recall instances which may bear out what I say, although I have no particular cases in mind at the moment). But this is what I mean: There is no unity of life in the home where the child is taught neatness and punctuality, while the parent does not practice it. There is separation. There is no unity of life in the home of the child who is taught at school the obligations of citizenship, while the parent does not live up to those obligations. There is no unity of life in the home in which the child is required to memorize the elementary rules of morality, while the parent exemplifies the contrary. There is separation in that home, where there should be unity. The child who is taught at parochial school or Sunday School the simple prayers of childhood, which are all the more true because of their simplicity, experiences a strange reaction when he notices that his parents do not pray. The reaction is that the child concludes that prayer belongs to the church or the school, but not to the home. If teacher says one thing about good and bad—although, unfortunately, too little is said in schools about

these eternal principles—if teacher says one thing, while father and mother do another, that is the end of one standard of morality for the child. How could it be otherwise? You can't blame the little fellow because he is puzzled. He is a babe in the moral woods. He has been separated from his natural guides. That is one thing which I mean by separation.

This, too, is what I mean: If some other person, or business, or government, should make it attractive to the parent to leave the home, without excellent and guaranteed provision for the welfare of the children, this is a temptation towards separation. The temptation is too often very successful. The child, somehow, realizes—if old enough—that the parent is shirking a responsibility. Well, the little mind argues, if Daddy, if Mamma, can neglect me, I can neglect other things. You can't blame the little child. It is a bent twig. The tree inclines later. The parent, separated for much of the waking time of the child, doesn't notice the bending, but the child is bent to other things, nevertheless.

This, too, is what I mean by separation. The parent who leaves all the child's education to the school, forgets that the first school is the home. There are things

which must be taught which cannot be taught in school. The good teacher, in normal human life, should be only a part time substitute for the parent. But if the parent is not familiar with the mental development of the child, a separation takes place. Things can go wrong. And they do go wrong, too often.

This, too, is what I mean by separation. The parent who leaves the child's religion entirely to the care of the Church, forgets that the child is not likely to have any interest in things which do not seem to interest the parent. As the parent does, so does the child. If the child is taught the divine truths of religion on the one hand, only to find on the other that the parent does not know them, or does not believe them, or does not teach them by example, there is a separation of parent from child. And that happens too often.

Can we blame the child for this separation? Not in the ordinary case. It may be that, later, under particular conditions, the child runs away—from home, from rectitude, from the advice of the parents. But that is the extraordinary case. In the large, this separation takes place because older people would have it so. These older people are *not* anxious that the child be the



best of men. They are concerned rather with some present opportunity, than with the future security of young America.

If our leadership is good the child will be good. Like father, like son. Like mother, like child.

Let us be modest and truthful about it. If the child be delinquent, he has followed our leadership. If the child is to be led aright, we must lead. What a glorious leadership that can be. *There is nothing more worthy of a man's ambition than that his son be the best of men!*

It is my personal conviction that the prevention of juvenile delinquency cannot be achieved without a logical cure. That logical cure is the correction of adult delinquency. The child is given to us for our leadership. If our leadership is bad, the child will be bad.

## A LITTLE CHILD LEADS US

(Talk given on December 26, 1943)

The celebration of the birthday of Jesus Christ is like no other birthday celebration. The simple reason for this is that there is no one like Jesus, the Son of God, our Savior. It is a simple reason, but, like other simple reasons, it demands a lot of study and understanding. Christmas is Christmas because Jesus is Christ. Even if we do not understand that fully, we must at least admit to ourselves that there must be *some* powerful reason for the endurance of a date in history for two thousand years; the endurance in the calendar of civilization of a date which was marked by the birth of a child whose earthly parents were humble and obscure people from a little town called Nazareth. There must be some reason why the birth of that child has been considered so very important in the subsequent history of mankind. There must be some reason why Christmas has become more than any old day; why it has become the great day of the year; why it has become more than a great day; why it has become a season in itself. Christmas is more than just a day, because the Child whose birth it marks was more than just a human child. He is of Jesus Christ is like no other divine. There is, there was, no birthday celebration. The simple other human being like Him. That is why there is nothing else like Christmas.

The story is plain enough. Everybody knows what happened. "And it came to pass that in those days there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that the whole world should be enrolled. This enrolling was first made by Cyrinus, the governor of Syria. And all went to be enrolled, every one into his own city.

"And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; because he was of the house and family of David, to be enrolled with Mary his espoused wife, who was with child. And it came to pass, that when they were there, her days were accomplished, that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him up in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

"And there were in the same country shepherds watching, and keeping the night-watches over

their flock. And behold an angel of the Lord stood by them, and the brightness of God shone round them, and they feared with a great fear.

“And the angel said to them: Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, that shall be to all the people; for this day is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David. And this shall be a sign unto you: You shall find the infant wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly army, praising God, and saying: Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace to men of good will.

“And it came to pass, after the angels departed from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another: Let us go over to Bethlehem, and let us see this word that is come to pass, which the Lord hath shewed to us. And they came with haste; and they found Mary and Joseph, and the infant lying in the manger. And seeing, they understood of the word that had been spoken to them concerning this child” (*Luke 2: 1-17*).

When they had seen, the history of St. Luke tells us, they understood. Let us, for a few minutes, try better to understand.

Let us visit the newly born babe.

What do we see in Him? If we see only a child, just like any other child, we see exactly what we are supposed to see: an infant whom anybody could love, of whom no one need be afraid. Our eyes see exactly what is there. But our minds should see more than that.

The angel told the shepherds who this Child was: a savior who is Christ the Lord. The angel of the fields repeated what had been told to the Mother by the angel Gabriel at the Annunciation, nine months before: “Thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a son; and thou shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the most High” (*Luke 1: 31-32*). When the shepherds had heard the angel in the fields, they investigated. They did the obvious thing. They did not scoff at the idea of a Savior, of a Christ. They went to find out for themselves. And when they had seen, the gospel relates, they understood. They understood, as a result of their reasonable inquiries, coupled with God’s grace, that this Child was the Son of the Most High, the Son of God. They understood that this Child, just then born in time, was indeed begotten in all eternity by God the Father. This Child was the Word made flesh. This was no mere human child that they saw. He was a

human Child, but He was more than that. He was the divine Child.

How did the shepherds learn all this? By inquiry. How did they find that this was worthy of their belief? By investigation. How are we to find it worthy of belief? How are we to learn the inner meaning of this event? How are we to discover the depth of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God? Only as the shepherds—by inquiry and investigation. And when we have seen, we shall understand.

We shall see and understand, if we investigate the evidence that the Child born of Mary on the first Christmas is like no other child, because He is the Son of God. We shall see and understand that Christmas is not only the birthday of a man-child, but the birthday of the Man-God. We shall see and understand that Christmas means nothing unless it means that God became man. We shall see and understand that those Christians who follow the human history of Jesus and call themselves after Him, while, at the same time, they withhold from Him the humble acknowledgment of His divinity, are not really seeing and understanding, themselves. They deny the true meaning of His own words; they fail to understand His mis-

sion; and, while they celebrate a feast at Christmas, they bring no honor to Bethlehem. They do not see and they do not understand.

We shall see and understand, if we go over to Bethlehem—that is, if we study the Scriptures—what the Shepherds understood. We shall understand that the Jewish people had expected the coming of some one, of a Messiah. They had a reason to expect Him. First of all they had been promised that He would appear. Secondly, He had been described for them by their prophets. Thirdly, they knew exactly where and approximately when He would come. And this was He, whom the shepherds saw. And they understood.

We shall see and understand, as the shepherds understood, that there was work for the Messiah to do. His mission was to “save his people from their sins” (*Matthew 1: 21*). It was because of sin that He came. It was to save us from sin, to rid us of sin, that He was born, and lived, and preached, and died, and rose from the dead. We sinners shall understand that He came for us and to us because we are sinners. He came to us as a Christ, a Messiah, a Savior. We shall understand, without too much difficulty, that if we forget that this Child is no mere human child,

but something more than that, we will follow the inspiration of Christmas can mean but very little. grace, that this Child is three

Those who do not understand the work which Jesus came to do can see little of divinity in Christmas. He is the Son of God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. He is the human being, Jesus, the Son of the Virgin Mary. He is the Christ, the Savior of mankind. He is all these things in His own divine Person.

If we understand less than all this, we should try to understand more. The shepherds were moved by the message of the angel. We are moved by the interior voice of divine grace. We should no more refuse to obey it than the shepherds should have refused the angel's word. If we obey, we shall see and understand. We shall see and understand the nature of Christmas, which marks the eternal birth of the only begotten Son of God; which marks the temporal birth of Jesus, the only Child of Mary, the Virgin Mother; which marks the spiritual birth of the Redeemer in our souls, who came to save His people from their sins. It is because of this three-fold birth that the Church celebrates this birthday with three Masses instead of one. In this three-fold celebration we shall see and understand.

Those who celebrate Christmas because they follow the salutary rules which He laid down for a good life, but do not acknowledge that He is our Savior, do not understand the Child in the manger. They are the people who speak of Jesus as a great teacher, Jesus as a humble leader, Jesus as a subtle student of human nature. They are the people who compare Jesus with Confucius and Buddha and others in a confusing attempt to make them more than human and Him less than divine. They are the people who always refer to Him as Jesus, but withhold from Him His proper and exclusive title: Christ. Unless they understand that this Child is not only Jesus, but Jesus the Christ, the Anointed, they have little reason to celebrate Christmas.

We will see and understand, if we see the Child and we understand the Redeemer. We understand the Redeemer and we under-

stand that He is God's own Son, who must Himself be God. If we merely see, but do not understand, let us look on the Child a little longer, with more confidence and with more love. That we might understand, this Child was given to us; that we might understand, this Son was born to us. In time, we shall understand, if we take time to go over to His Bethlehem and see.

The Son of God came on earth to give us abundant life. This abundance is not measured in human terms, nor limited by human fantasy, nor circumscribed by the

confines of this world. The Son of God lived among us that, by teaching us a better way of life here, He might lead us to the best life hereafter; a life of endless happiness, of endless peace, of endless freedom.

All this goodness, which redemption implies, is come to us in this Child, that, with our little minds, we may understand. All this comes to us in a little Child that our timid hearts may beat with a deeper love. We are led by a little Child that, with our small and faltering steps, we may follow Him home.

# STATIONS CARRYING THE HOUR OF FAITH

Alabama	Mobile	WMOB	1230 kc
Arkansas	Hot Springs	KTHS	1090 kc
California	Fresno-Visalia	KTKC	940 kc
	Los Angeles	KECA	790 kc
	San Francisco	KGO	810 kc
Colorado	Denver	KVOD	630 kc
District of Columbia	Washington	WMAL	630 kc
Florida	St. Petersburg-Tampa	WSUN	620 kc
Indiana	Fort Wayne	WOWO	1190 kc
Iowa	Burlington	KBUR	1490 kc
	Davenport	WOC	1420 kc
	Dubuque	WKBB	1490 kc
	Sioux City	KSCJ	1360 kc
Kansas	Coffeyville	KGGF	690 kc
	Lawrence	WREN	1250 kc
Kentucky	Louisville	WINN	1240 kc
Louisiana	New Orleans	WDSU	1280 kc
Massachusetts	Worcester	WORC	1310 kc
Michigan	Bay City	WBCM	1440 kc
	Jackson	WIBM	1450 kc
	Saulte Ste. Marie	WSEO	1230 kc
Mississippi	Gulfport	WGCM	1240 kc
	Jackson	WSLI	1450 kc
	Vicksburg	WQBC	1390 kc
Missouri	Hannibal	KHMO	1340 kc
	Kansas City	KCMO	1480 kc
	St. Louis	KXOK	630 kc
Nebraska	Lincoln	KFOR	1240 kc
	Omaha	KOWH	660 kc
New York	New York	WJZ	770 kc
Ohio	Akron	WAKR	1590 kc
	Cincinnati	WSAI	1360 kc
	Cleveland	WJW	850 kc
	Columbus	WCOL	1230 kc
	Toledo	WTOL	1230 kc
Oklahoma	Ardmore	KVSO	1240 kc
	Muskogee	KBIX	1490 kc
	Shawnee	KGFF	1450 kc
	Tulsa	KOME	1340 kc
Pennsylvania	Scranton	WARM	1400 kc
South Carolina	Sumter	WFIG	1340 kc











