

Riley, Lawrence J.  
Light of Christ.  
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# **LIGHT OF CHRIST**

REV. LAWRENCE J. RILEY



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Seven addresses delivered on The Catholic Hour from February 22, 1953 through April 5, 1953 by the Rev. Lawrence J. Riley. The program is produced by the National Council of Catholic Men in cooperation with the National Broadcasting Company.

BY

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## BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT

Address Delivered On February 22, 1953

In the profoundly impressive and traditionally beautiful ceremony of Holy Saturday, after the new fire has been solemnly blessed by the priest at the door of the Church, with deacon and subdeacon and other ministers he slowly enters the Church and devoutly approaches the sanctuary. In the hushed darkness three times the procession comes to a halt. And then on each occasion, as he lights one of the branches of the triple candle the deacon breaks the awesome silence with the age-old chant: "Lumen Christi: Light of Christ."

Because fire furnishes light and heat, the liturgy of the church utilizes it as a symbol of Jesus Christ, the Light of the world. For by His teaching the minds of men and women and children are enlightened, and by His grace their hearts are enkindled. That is why these conferences during the holy season of Lent are being grouped together under the title "Lumen Christi." For as no other words ever spoken since the dawn of history, the beatitudes, upon which we purpose to meditate, can enlighten the mind to know, and enkindle the heart to love.

Early one morning amid the

golden splendor of Galilean spring sunshine, almost at the very commencement of His public career, Our Divine Lord descended half way down a mountain, on the rugged summit of which He had spent the night in fervent prayer. Gathering about Him the multitude who had hastened out from city streets and country fields to drink in avidly every precious word of the Master, softly He began to speak to them. Many centuries before, amid the rumbling of thunder and the flashing of lightning, the awe-inspiring Commandments had been majestically proclaimed to Moses on Mount Sinai. But now on the mountainside in Galilee the Son of God was speaking softly. His theme was happiness—a soul-stirring, heart-thrilling, yet tantalizing, bewitching theme that had captivated and absorbed the minds of countless philosophers and poets and orators from the dawn of time. But with this tremendous difference — they could only inquire haltingly into its nature; He could reveal authoritatively what it really is. They could only sigh for it; He could bestow it.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Mt. 5, 3) Blessed,

happy, fortunate are the poor in spirit. The multitude was fascinated and mystified. So often they had heard the concept of happiness misinterpreted, twisted, warped, distorted. But now the Son of God was declaring to them that happiness has its origin where others had taught that only misery begins.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit.” It would be erroneous to interpret this beatitude as a panegyric of pauperism. Jesus Christ never eulogized poverty for poverty’s sake. St. Augustine in commenting upon these words of our Divine Lord provides us with the key to their correct meaning and their profound significance. “A rich man,” says St. Augustine, “who is able to despise in himself whatever there is in him by which pride can be puffed up, is God’s poor man.” (*Sentent.*, 250) What Jesus Christ commended and extolled on that rocky mountainside in Galilee nineteen hundred years ago was detachment of the heart from the material and the worldly—not merely from material and worldly possessions, but more especially from material and worldly attitudes and values, from arrogance and conceit and ambition and pride. Basically in the first beatitude are to be found a castigation of pride and a canonization of humility.

It is no exaggeration to state that the root of all the vices in man and in society is pride.

St. Thomas Aquinas does not hesitate to call pride the first and the beginning of all sins, a vice which more than any other turns man from God. (Cf. *Sum. Theol.*, II-II, q. 162, a. 7) It was the sin of pride that cast the fallen angels hurtling into the fiery depths of the newly created hell, there to suffer unceasingly excruciating torment. It was the sin of pride that drove the rebellious Adam and Eve in shame and ignominy and terror from the delights of the Garden of Eden into a bleak and barren world. Yes, and it is pride—pride and its ugly offsprings: self-sufficiency, conceit, ambition, haughtiness, arrogance, hypocrisy—these are the vices that lie at the root of every deviation from God and from God’s law, on the part of men and of society.

Pride has been described as “an inordinate love of self, which causes us to consider ourselves, explicitly or implicitly, as our first beginning and our last end.” (Tanqueray: *The Spiritual Life*). It is not pride to recognize truthfully the gifts and abilities and skills that God has bestowed upon us. But it is pride to refuse to acknowledge that “it is God Who of His good pleasure works in you both the will and the performance.” (Phil. 2, 13) It is pride to scoff at the pressing, insistent, momentous question of St. Paul: “What has thou that thou hast not received?” (1 Cor. 4, 7)

Men become so desirous to be highly esteemed, so ready to give themselves to pretense and to posing, so ruthless to get ahead at any cost, so hungry for glory and greedy for popularity, so irked at opposition, so resentful of criticism, so sensitive to neglect, so anxious to win approbation, so eager to wallow in applause.

The fundamental viciousness of pride lies in the fact that the proud man makes himself his first beginning and his last end. Refusing to acknowledge his dependence upon God, attributing to himself his capacities and his talents and his endowments, in his self-sufficiency and conceit he cries out: "I will live my own life"—which is but a discordant echoing of the blasphemy of Lucifer: "I will not serve." The proud man exalts himself. He denies God's supremacy. He enshrines himself as an idol to be venerated and burns before himself the incense of worship. He usurps God's honor. He appropriates to himself the homage that belongs to God. In a sense, he robs God of what is His alone. And so God does not simply desert the proud, or forsake the proud, or abandon the proud. But in the startling and terrifying words of Holy Scripture: "God resists the proud." (James 4, 6) For "I the Lord, this is My name: I will not give My glory to another." (Is, 42).

"Blessed are the poor in

spirit." Humility is not weakness and falsehood, but power and truth. It is, as St. Thomas Aquinas teaches, "a virtue by which the mind is strengthened so as not to exalt itself above what it really is." (*Sum. Theol.* II-II, q. 161, a.1). Humility is not self-abasement, but rather self-forgetfulness. It is not the wish that others think little of us, but rather the desire that they think of us not at all. It is not a prying into our souls to analyze how mean we are, but rather a gazing upon God to discover how Divine-like we can become.

I know that the modern world considers humility to be cowardice and timidity—the instability of pallid and colorless personalities. It glories in making its own the aphorism of the sage of Concord: "Self-trust is the essence of heroism." (Emerson, *Essays*). But is it not significant and even startling that of all the virtues practiced for our edification by Jesus Christ the Son of God during His life upon earth, it is humility in particular that He Himself singled out for our imitation: "Learn from Me, for I am meek and humble of heart." (Mt. 11, 29).

It is our good fortune to live in an age of unparalleled scientific advancement. In every branch of human learning, the achievements of men and women have been conspicuous and outstanding. Ours is a civiliza-

tion with comforts more exquisite than our ancestors in the wildest wanderings of imagination had ever even dreamed. Yet society in our day is permeated and pervaded with intellectual pride.

So many of the pseudo-intellectuals of the modern world glibly prattle that science has done away with the need for God—despite the fact that oftentimes the very essence of the things about which they so confidently declaim (matter and light and electricity, for example) is shrouded in mystery or utterly unknown. If only they would understand that every new discovery of science emphasizes man's greater dependence upon God—both because it evidences the Omnipotence of Him Who hid that secret in nature's bosom, and because it creates a necessity that man discipline his newly found power. For is it not the awful tragedy of our age that modern man has prostituted his knowledge to the shocking purpose of ruthless blood-shedding and ghastly mass slaughter? Glorifying in the conquest of his discovery of a few of nature's secrets, flushed with the heat of success because he had subdued a mere handful of the almost infinite forces of nature, bloated with pride over his paltry achievements, modern man vaunts the defiance of Lucifer: "I will not serve"—because he has succumbed to Satan's temptation to Eve: "You shall be as

gods." (Gen. 3, 5). Modern man so often disregards God, and doubts God, and denies God, and rejects God—because he dreams of substituting himself for God. It is not so much that science and knowledge are adored as ends, but rather that they are utilized as means to bring about the worship of mankind.

Do you think I exaggerate? Then meditate upon the stark antithesis between Christ's doctrine of poverty of spirit and the categorical definitiveness of this dogmatic utterance of one of our modern intellectuals. "That man is the product of causes that had no prevision of the end they were achieving; that his origin, his growth, his hopes and his fears, his loves and his beliefs are but the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms; that no fire, no heroism, no intensity of thought and feeling can preserve an individual life beyond the grave . . . all these things, if not quite beyond dispute, are yet so nearly certain that no philosophy which rejects them can hope to stand." (Bertrand Russell, "A Free Man's Worship," *Indep. Rev.*, Dec. 1938).

Do you think I exaggerate? Then ponder upon the triumphant affirmation of contented self-sufficiency in these words of the high priest of modern progressive education. "We assert that modern science makes unacceptable any supernatural

or cosmic guarantees of human values." (John Dewey, in *New Humanist*, May-June, 1933). "Faith in the divine author and authority in which Western civilization confided, inherited ideas of the soul and its destiny, of fixed revelation . . . have been made impossible for the cultivated mind of the Western World." (*What I Believe*).

In point of fact, are the achievements of our age so tremendous, so magnificent, so spectacular? May we not with profit reflect upon the shrewd observations of George Santayana, that "those who speak most of progress, measure it by quantity and not by quality." (*Winds of Doctrine*) Would it not be rewarding to study the indictment of our age by Robert Hutchins: "The most characteristic feature of the modern world is bewilderment . . . We do not know where we are going, or why; and we have almost given up the attempt to find out." ("Issue In the Higher Learning," *Internat., Journal of Ethics*, Jan. 1934). Those who bask in the sunshine of their own glowing estimate of the supposedly grandiose accomplishments of the twentieth century—would they not be shocked out of their smug complacency by meditating upon the grim judgement of T. S. Eliot: "We can assert with some confidence that our own period is one of decline, that the standards of culture are lower than they were fifty years ago,

and that the evidences of this decline are visible in every department of human activity." (*C. F. Reader's Digest*, Aug. 1950).

And is not the decay of modern society which is the inevitable consequence of the intellectual pride of our age, whereby man has rejected God—is not that the theme of many of the writings of some of the profoundest thinkers of the day: Dawson and Maritain and Mumford and Sorokin and Toynbee? In fine, as Lord Halifax so forcibly expressed it a short time ago: "If our social order today shows signs of disintegration, this is, I believe, less through the destruction of war than through the slow attrition of its religious and cultural foundations, and through the impact of intellectual forces which have created a vacuum without themselves having the capacity to fill it." (*Cf. Cath. Mind*, Sept. 1952).

It is all so very logical—terrifyingly so. The philosophical basis was laid two centuries ago by Immanuel Kant when he taught that rational nature is autonomous, an end unto itself, and hence obligated only by its own law. Given the premise of Kant that man is his own end, given the development and intensification of that premise in the perverted egoism of the superman philosophy of Nietzsche, ultimately and inevitably one is driven to the

twentieth century totalitarianism of Hitler and Stalin. For intellectual arrogance always and inexorably eventuates in lust for power.

Modern man would be like God. But placing his trust solely in the things of time, feeding upon material husks, he has starved his spiritual nature. And so in his very attempts, born as they are of intellectual pride, he has become more and more unlike God. For he has stained and defiled the image of God within himself. For the

individual and for society, there is but one hope—a return to God. And strangely enough, what God promises is this: that if man serves Him in humility of heart and poverty of spirit, he will become like God. For in all the writings of the world's literature, there is no pledge so sublime as that of Holy Scripture: "He has granted us the very great and precious promise so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature." (2 Pet. 1, 4).

## BLESSED ARE THE MEEK: BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL

Address Delivered On March 1, 1953

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, had the noblest, the sublimest, and the most lovable character of any man who ever lived. As He tramped through the narrow mountain paths of Galilee, or trod the dusty road along the banks of the Jordan, or made His way through the crowded shops of Jerusalem, everywhere He drew irresistibly to Himself countless men and women and children throughout Palestine—not alone because of the wondrous doctrine that He taught, not alone because of the stupendous miracles that He performed, but above all else, because of His own personal, overpowering magnetism, because He was meek and gentle and mild, patient and forgiving and compassionate.

Meekness and forgiveness were the predominant characteristics of the parables which He related—the parable of the prodigal son who was welcomed home by a passionately loving father whose tear-filled eyes bespoke the pardon of a forgiving heart; the parable of the good shepherd who not only left the ninety-nine to go out in search of the lost sheep, but even laid down his life for his loved ones.

Meekness and forgiveness were the keynotes of His doctrine, as He opened up to mankind's view the vast ocean of divine forgiveness—that the repentant sinner must be pardoned seventy times seven times; that much had been forgiven the sorrow-stricken, heart-broken Magdalen because she had loved much.

Meekness shone forth in the eyes of Jesus Christ as He whispered a soft and gentle call to the rich young man who came to Him in his quest for perfection; and forgiveness, as those eyes addressed a silent but eloquent plea to the impetuous and self-reliant Peter who thrice had denied Him under oath.

Meekness and forgiveness characterized the reprimands that infrequently fell from His lips—to the unfortunate woman guilty of adultery: "Has no one condemned thee? . . . Neither will I." (John 8, 11); to the terror-stricken Apostles huddled together at His feet in the storm-tossed boat on the tempestuous Lake: "Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?" (Mt. 8, 26). He was ready to forgive even the treacherous Judas selling his God with a

slimy kiss: "Friend, dost thou betray the Son of Man with a kiss?" (Cf. Mt. 26, 50; Luke 22, 48).

Meekness and forgiveness were resplendent upon His bruised and blackened and blood-stained face, as He accepted without murmur the angry blow of the menial in the hall of Annas, as He submitted to the scourging of His flesh into tatters and the crowning of His head with thorns, as He pleaded on the gory, skull-covered Mount of Calvary: "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." (Luke 23, 34).

But the meekness of Jesus Christ must not be interpreted as faint-heartedness or softness or weakness. For the Son of God was terrifyingly capable of wrathful indignation. He was scathingly critical of self-righteousness and insincerity and hypocrisy. The money changers who made of His Father's house a den of thieves, the envy-blinded plotters with bitter vengeance in their hearts and death schemes in their minds, who accused Him of performing miracles by Satan's power, the Scribes and Pharisees who made clean the outside of the cup and of the dish but within were full of rapine and uncleanness—all of them cringed tremblingly beneath the withering censure of His divine condemnation.

"Blessed are the meek." (Mt.

5, 4). In the character of Jesus Christ we have a living example of true meekness. Meekness is strength, force in reserve. He who is possessed of it has the fortitude to control his emotions, his feelings, his very self. He has the courage to bear opposition and oppression and suffering without a cry of complaint or a shout of rebellion against God. He has the fearlessness to stand uncompromisingly loyal to his principles, and yet the selflessness to be resolute without being aggressive, to be firm without being stubborn.

The man who is meek is not always proclaiming his own rights, but he is ever zealous to uphold the rights of God. He places his trust not in force, but in kindness. On the secret battlefield of his own heart he has fought fierce and savage wars, but they have ended in smashing and glorious victory—victory over self. It is the victory of the saints—history's strongest characters—heroes who subdued their bodies by fasting and discipline, who bridled their natural passions by doing good to those who hated them, and who, many of them, because they were unyielding in their devotions to Jesus Christ, valiantly and dauntlessly endured the cruellest torment and most ruthless torture that diabolically hating minds could contrive.

"Blessed are the meek." In

its nobler moments even the world bestows its approbation upon meekness and kindness.

"The drying up of a single tear has more of honest fame, than shedding seas of gore."

(Byron: *Don Juan*)

The promise of the Son of God to the man who is meek, is not fame. He pledges nothing spectacular, no fanfare, no magnificence, no flourish of trumpets. But to the meek He holds out possession of the land, participation in His kingdom—which is the enjoyment of heavenly bliss forever and forever.

In one of his writings (cf. *Character Formation*), Father John O'Brien of Notre Dame relates a gripping incident which, it is said, occurred some years ago during the height of the Spanish Civil War, and which exemplifies in vivid and realistic fashion the fulfillment of the divine command to pardon one's enemies. For indeed: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." (Mt. 5, 7). When the diabolical hatred of the godless Communists was seething at fever pitch and their fury bursting forth into frenzied violence and slaughter, early one morning at break of dawn, a feeble, white-haired, brow-wrinkled old priest with shackled hands was roughly led out from his dingy prison cell to face a firing squad. The last-minute preparations for the execution were being made

amid disorder and excitement. In a moment another stalwart soul would grasp the palm of martyrdom. Suddenly the condemned priest raised his voice above the turbulent noise and blustering shouts of the prison yard. He had a final request to make. One last act he wished to perform—an act at once simple and heroic. This he asked: that the rope which tied his hands be cut, in order that he might raise them in blessing over his torturers. It is hard—almost inhuman—to deny the request of a dying man. And so this poor priest's plea did not go unheeded. For one of the soldiers, seizing an ax, savagely hacked off not only the rope but also the hands of the condemned priest. There was a gasp of horror from those who stood by. But the priest—slowly he lifted his mangled arms, and over the Communist's head, with his bleeding stubs he solemnly traced the sign of the cross. "I forgive you," he said; "and may God forgive you and bless you."

It is hard to pardon those who have injured us. It is difficult to forget wounds that smart, to forgive injustices that leave behind an inheritance of rancor and give birth to a progeny of hate—to a scheming thirst for a word of retaliation and a lurking greed for an act of revenge. But blessed are the merciful, for it is they who will obtain mercy. Over and over again this is the trenchant and pointed lesson taught to man-

kind by Jesus Christ. It is the theme of the parable of the unforgiving servant. "And his master being angry handed him over to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. So also My heavenly Father will do to you, if you do not each forgive your brothers from your hearts." (Mt. 18, 34-35).

It is the epitome of the Christian way of life. "If thou art offering thy gift at the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother has anything against thee, leave thy gift before the altar and go first to be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." (Mt. 5, 23-25).

It is the pleading prayer which Jesus Christ Himself taught to those who would be His followers: "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." (Mt. 6, 12).

Only he who is willing to forgive can enjoy true inward peace. For the craving for revenge gnaws harrowingly at the shrivelled soul, and the yearning to "pay back" hardens and prevents the embittered heart.

Man must forgive—not because he is indifferent to right and wrong, but because to forgive is Christ-like; because to forgive is prompted by supernatural love of neighbor—and that is based on love of God. Love of God and love of neighbor have one and the same mo-

tive—and that motive is God. If we would practice the theological virtue of charity, then we must learn to realize our oneness with our neighbor—even with our enemy—because he has been made to God's image and likeness, and because for him Jesus Christ offered His life on a blood-splashed cross on the sun-eclipsed first Good Friday.

If we would practice the theological virtue of charity, then we must try to understand that our neighbor — even our enemy—is actually or potentially a temple of the Holy Spirit, the dwelling-place of the Triune God.

If we would practice the theological virtue of charity, then we must strive to see in our neighbor—even in our enemy—God Himself. "Amen I say to you, as long as you did it for one of these, the least of my brethren, you did it for Me." (Mt. 25, 40).

If we would practice the theological virtue of charity, then we must never grow weary of aiming to appreciate more profoundly this tremendous truth: that to those who like us partake of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist, we are bound in a union that is unique. Seventeen hundred years ago the realization of this awesome thought so stunned the mind of St. Cyprian of Carthage that he must needs shout it to all the world. "The

Lord's sacrifice," he cried, "symbolizes the oneness of heart guaranteed by a persevering and inviolable charity, which should prevail among Christians. For when our Lord calls His Body bread, a substance which is kneaded together out of many grains, He teaches that we His people whom He sustains, are bound together in a union of intimacy. And when He speaks of His Blood as wine, in which the juice pressed from many clusters of grapes is mingled in one liquid, He likewise teaches that by the commingling of a multitude of persons, we His flock are made one." (Ep. 96).

This is no fanciful flight of poetry. This is no extravagant dream of an over-enthusiastic imagination. This is no figment of the mind. It is truth—God's truth. For has He not revealed it to us in the inspired words of St. Paul: "Because the bread is one, we though many, are one body, all of us who partake of the one bread." (1 Cor. 10, 17).

O dearest Jesus our Brother, Thou Who on a rugged mountain slope nineteen hundred years ago, didst enunciate the principles for a Christian revolution and outline the basis for

a Christian charter, Thou Who didst preach: "Blessed are the meek; blessed are the merciful," teach us to be like unto Thee—compassionate and sympathetic, gentle and forgiving. Teach us to understand that Thou art a lion of strength, St. John the Baptist pointed to Thee as the Lamb of God. Teach us to fear the punishment that will inevitably befall those who are too hating to forgive and too resentful to forget. Teach us to realize that "he who says that he is in the light, and hates his brother is in the darkness" (1 John 2, 9); that "everyone who hates his brother is a murderer" (1 John 3, 15); that "if anyone says 'I love God', and hates his brother, he is a liar." (1 John 4, 20). Teach us above all else to love—to love Thee and to love our fellow-man because of Thee. Teach us that even if we should speak with the tongues of men and of angels, even if we should have knowledge to know all things and faith to move lofty mountains—and yet have not love, we are but sounding brass and tinkling cymbal. (1 Cor. 13). Teach us to love—and that is enough; for love "is the fulfillment of the Law" (Rom. 13, 10), and "perfect love casts out fear." (1 John 4, 18).

# BLESSED ARE THEY WHO MOURN

Address Delivered On March 8, 1953

As the first streaks of a brilliant dawn eagerly lighted up the distant horizon to herald the arrival of the twentieth century, mankind keenly looked forward to an auspicious and promising era. And throughout the early years of our century, it was indeed a confident and buoyant spirit of unqualified optimism that pervaded the very atmosphere. Expectantly men anticipated a golden epoch of happiness and good fortune, and unending period in which dreams that had obsessed and haunted the human race from the dim beginnings of history, age-old dreams of peace and prosperity, would at last be gloriously realized. War would soon be an obsolete instrument of the unenlightened policy of less civilized times. Constantly evolving progress was irresistible and inevitable. An unlimited and unceasing freedom would soon become the precious heritage of the human race—or at least of that portion of the human race whose manifest destiny it was, by decree of a benign Providence, to rule over the backward and less advanced. Only an irresponsible and foolhardy skeptic would be rash enough to deny the obvi-

ous and inescapable fact that Utopia was on the horizon.

And was it not obvious? In politics—at least in American politics—the partisans of progressivism were forging ahead and within the foreseeable future would soon dominate the field of government. In economics rugged individualism and unrestricted free enterprise would unquestionably produce so flourishing and so thriving a prosperity as would speedily relegate to dusty history books such antiquated and out-of-date terms as “economic depression” and “financial panic.” In education the devotees of the school of uninhibited self-expression were unmistakably becoming more numerous and more influential; and hopefully they cherished the fond expectation that soon they would liberate the educational world from the shackles of traditionalism that fettered it.

Even in the field of theological thought—I mean in some circles outside the Catholic Church—the “new freedom” with its jubilant spirit of unquestioning optimism received a warm and welcome embrace. As its influence began to expand, the doctrine of original

sin came to be minimized or abandoned entirely. The stark and grim fact that human beings, tainted and defiled by original sin, are capable of the most sinister and vicious crimes—that fact was overlooked and disregarded. In many writings the absolutely essential distinction between the Infinite nature of God and the finite nature of man, and between the natural and the supernatural became obscured. Indeed one of the most distinguished non-Catholic theologians at the turn of the century discoursed enthusiastically about the “democracy of God” and urgently exhorted his conferees to dissolve the dichotomy that split existence into the natural and the supernatural. (Coe, *A Social Theory of Religious Education*).

It was all so engagingly pleasant, so unsuspectingly hopeful, so bewitchingly optimistic. And indeed, apparently so demonstrably certain. For did it not have sound and healthy philosophical roots in the Leibnitzian doctrine of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries—that this is the best of all possible worlds? What mattered it that that doctrine was diametrically opposed to the teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas that “no creation can exhaust the power of the Creator.” (*De Veritate*, q. 20, a. 4). What mattered it that that philosophical tenet of Leibnitz stood contrary to the

magnificent verse of the Psalmist: “Whatever the Lord wills He does in heaven and on earth, in the sea and in all the depths of the sea.” (Ps. 134, 6). What mattered it that St. Paul should sublimely proclaim to the Christians of Ephesus that the Lord “works all things according to the counsel of His will.” (Eph. 1, 11).

What mattered it for the men of the new-born twentieth century, as they tingled with elation over the brilliant prospect of an untroubled future? From every side advancement, progress, enlightenment, hope, expectancy, optimism pressed down upon them. In ringing words of fiery enthusiasm before the happy graduates of a great American university, a distinguished speaker could reassuringly cry out his exultant prophecy: “The despotisms which hitherto harassed men are gone forever.” (*GREAT SERMONS by Great Preachers*, p. 597). In the rhythmic cadences of the *Hymn of Man* the poetic genius Algernon Swinburne could triumphantly sing: “Glory to Man in the highest! for Man is the master of things.” And with undaunted self-reliance and unhesitating self-assurance the confident William Ernest Henly could boast in the memorable lines of his *Invictus*:

Out of the night that covers me,  
Black as the pit from pole to  
pole,

I think whatever gods may be  
For my unconquerable soul.

It matters not how strait the  
gate,

How charged with punishments  
the scroll;

I am the master of my fate:

I am the captain of my soul.

And now, scarcely more than half a century has passed away. Today, how stark is the contrast and how bleak the outlook. On the first day of the second half of this century, one of the leading articles in one of the most widely read newspapers in the English-speaking world — the *Manchester Guardian* — commenced with this grimly concise statement of well nigh utter hopelessness: "Few years in our history can have opened more gloomily." Dismal, depressing, cheerless were the sombre words of the leading editorial of *The New York Times* on the last Sunday of last year. "There used to be a time," it said, "when people sat down comfortably at the end of the year and measured progress. Nobody, except a few skeptics, doubted the fact of progress. Just as the earth went round the sun, and by a somewhat similar law—so it appeared—humanity was growing wiser and better. We are less ambitious today in our year-end estimates. We are glad to break even, to be able to say that . . . no irrevocable catastrophe has overwhelmed the human race."

The mood of the hour is one

of despair. In actual fact, if not in theory, the philosophical Pessimism of Schopenhauer has perhaps more disciples today than ever before. "The denial of the will to live is the way of redemption," was his teaching. And is it not along that weary road of Stygian darkness and gloomy dejection that millions of our fellow-men are desolately plodding today? Theirs is an apprehensive anxiety for what tomorrow's news may bring; theirs is a lonely grief for what the scars of yesterday's wars have caused. Two world-enveloping conflicts within the span of a single generation. Present and past inundated by a towering wave of ruthless war, of barbaric cruelty and inhuman torture, of famine and pestilence, of displaced millions and dispossessed exiles, of prisons and concentration camps, of crime and immorality, of absolutism and tyranny—so appalling and so horrifying as would stagger the imaginations of those in past ages, whom the early twentieth century, with glib boastfulness and tragic irony, used to call less advanced, less progressive, less civilized.

And the future? Over the future hangs the ominous and threatening and haunting ghost of a bomb.

Why try to go on any more? Human existence is futile. Life is purposeless. Ours is an evil fate that flows inexorably from

the pre-determined workings of malevolent forces over which we have no control. As one of our most widely-known writers, Bertrand Russell, has expressed his philosophy: "Brief and powerless is man's life; on him and all his race, the slow, sure doom falls pitiless and dark." ("A free Man's Worship," *Indep. Rev.*, Dec. 1938).

Down from a steep and rugged mountain slope in Galilee—to console and to challenge our age and every age until time is no more—there rings out the inspiring message of the Son of God: "Blessed are they who mourn for they shall be comforted." (Mt. 5, 5). The devoted follower of Jesus Christ can be satisfied neither with the extravagant optimism of Leibnitz and Swinburne, nor with the despairing pessimism of Schopenhauer and Russell. The true Christian cannot overlook the uncompromising fact of evil in the world—of pain and suffering and hardship and misery. For if there were no sorrow or grief in the world the Son of God could never have cried out to the multitude on that Galilean mountainside: "Blessed are they who mourn." But on the other hand, if pessimism and despair and hopelessness were the answer to the problem of evil, then He could never have uttered that overwhelmingly consoling divine promise: "They shall be comforted."

The ardent disciple of our

Blessed Lord does not close his eyes to the awful fact of suffering; rather he opens them to the profound fact that suffering has a purpose. He is not afraid to acknowledge that it is the inescapable lot of every man and every woman and every child to mourn; but it is his glory and his privilege to proclaim to all the world the glad tidings that in God's divine plan they shall be comforted. Looking upon her children—each with his own pain and worry and anguish and distress and agony—the Catholic Church does not sing: "Invictus"; she does not chant "Glory to man in the highest"; she does not prophesy doom and annihilation. But she pleadingly beseeches a merciful God: "Kyrie eleison: Lord have mercy on us."

The disciple of Jesus Christ accepts the fact that there will be mourning by all mankind until the end of human history, because of a sin in which all mankind shared at the beginning of human history. "As through one man sin entered into the world and through sin death, and thus death has passed unto all men because all have sinned." (Rom. 5, 12).

The disciple of Jesus Christ accepts mourning as did Job of old: "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away. As it hath pleased the Lord, so is it done. Blessed be the name of the Lord." (Job 1, 21).

The disciple of Jesus Christ accepts mourning as an indispensable condition for the attainment of eternal glory. "It is the patience of the innocent sufferer that wins credit in the sight of God." (1 Pet. 2, 20).

The disciple of Jesus Christ accepts mourning because in the depths of his soul he realizes that for him and for all men, salvation is to be found only in oneness with Christ. And because the life of Christ was a life of bitter and anguished suffering, we can become like unto Christ and one with Christ, only if we, with the heavy cross on our wounded shoulders, tread the long, hard, blood-spattered road to Calvary's heights. "For unto you it is given for Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for Him." (Phil. 1, 29).

The disciple of Jesus Christ accepts mourning, for in His mystical body "Christ is in agony until the end of the world, and we must not sleep the while." (Pascal, *Pensees*, VII). The Son of God lives in His Church which is His Mystical Body. The redemptive merits of the physical Christ are distributed to mankind through the Mystical Christ. In God's Providence, the Mystical Christ must suffer, even as did the physical Christ. And it can suf-

fer only in its members. That is why St. Paul cried out: "What is lacking of the sufferings of Christ, I fill up in my flesh for His body, which is the Church." (Col. 1, 24).

The disciple of Jesus Christ accepts mourning because in the mysterious designs of the all-merciful God, men's souls are saved by the sufferings of others. For the members of the Mystical Body of Christ, in whom Christ lives, continue His mission upon the earth—but only in so far as they carry on the work which He Himself commenced and just as it was by self-immolation that Jesus Christ saved the world, so also it is only by self-sacrifice, by pain and suffering and agony and mourning, that we His members can save the world. (Cf. Plus, *Christ in Our Brethren*). For "without the shedding of blood, there is no redemption." (Heb. 9, 22).

"Blessed are they who mourn for they shall be comforted." In the heaven of eternal bliss the Lord God Himself will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, nor cries of distress, nor sorrow, nor mourning. For all these old things will have passed into the newness of eternal rapture. (Cf. Apoc. 21, 4).

## BLESSED ARE THEY WHO HUNGER AND THIRST FOR JUSTICE

Address Delivered On March 15, 1953

Gazing out in sadness and grief upon the brutal and savage tyranny which is crushing so many millions of innocent people throughout the world, our Holy Father three years ago, in sorrowful and touching words gave utterance to the distress and anxiety that overwhelmed his paternal heart. "Juridical positivism and state absolutism," he said, "have transformed and disfigured the noble countenance of justice." (Address to the S. R. Rota, 1949)

There can be no true justice apart from a recognition of and a respect for the natural law. For ultimately it is the natural law which gives birth to natural and inalienable rights. With those rights man is endowed, precisely because they are required in order that he fulfill his obligation to live in accordance with God's law. Moreover, it is the natural law which demands that to every individual must be accorded what is his due. And that is justice—justice which has been so fittingly described by one of our American poets as

"The hope of all who suffer,

The dread of all who wrong."  
(Whittier: *Mantle of St. John de Matha*)

The natural law is a rule of action, which reason itself reveals has been established by the Author of man's nature, and promulgated and imposed by being imbedded in that very nature. The natural law, as St. Thomas Aquinas has pointed out, is "the participation of the eternal law in a rational creature." (*Sum. Theol.*, I-II, q. 91, a. 2). And the eternal law is simply "the divine reason and will commanding that the natural order of things be preserved, and forbidding that it be disturbed." (St. Augustine, *Contra Paustum*). Or to express the thought in a slightly different way—by the natural law there is revealed to every human being through his reason, the obligation to observe God's eternal plan for the universe, in so far as it pertains to him as an individual and as a member of society. In God's providence every creature has a destiny. Every creature is held bound to act in accordance with the exigencies of its nature in order to achieve that destiny. Man, being endowed with intellect and will, must act freely. This obligation to guide his footsteps in the light of the requirements of his rational nature and thus attain

his destiny according to God's divine plan—this is the natural law. It is obvious therefore that the natural law is not a set of capricious and unreasonable precepts arbitrarily enacted by men or by governments or even by God. Rather, it is the law of one's very being, imposed by God the Author of nature and revealed to man through his reason.

St. Paul makes pointed reference to the natural law in his Epistle to the Romans. "As for the Gentiles," he writes, "though they have no law to guide them" (that is, they had not been given the Mosaic law supernaturally revealed to the Chosen People by God)—"as for the Gentiles, though they have no law to guide them, there are times when they carry out the precepts of the law unbidden, finding in their own nature a rule to guide them, in default of any other rule; and this shows that the obligations of the law are written in their hearts." (Rom. 2, 14-15)

Belief in the existence of the natural law was frequently expressed by the pagans of old. Thus, for example, in Sophocles' magnificent drama *Antigone*, in answer to the thundering demand of Creon, tyrant of Thebes, as to whether she dared transgress the imperial edict, the young girl, standing alone and defenseless before the despot, fearlessly defies his decree

by dramatically invoking the natural law: "I deemed not that thine edict had such force, that thou who art but mortal couldst over-ride the unwritten and unswerving laws of heaven—not of today and yesterday are they, but from everlasting."

Perhaps the clearest and most forceful explanation of the natural law from pagan antiquity, is found in the *De Republica* of Cicero, the illustrious Roman Statesman: "Right reason is indeed a true law, in accord with nature, diffused among all men, unchangeable, eternal. By its commands it calls men to duty; by its prohibitions it deters them from evil . . . To pass laws contrary to this law is impious; to derogate from it is unlawful; to do away with it is wholly impossible. Neither the Senate nor the people can dispense from it . . . Nor is there one law at Rome and another at Athens, one thing today and another tomorrow; but one and the same law eternal and immutable binds all nations and all times. There is one common Lord and Supreme Ruler of all—God the author, promulgator and mover of this law. And whosoever will refuse obedience to Him shall be filled with confusion, as this very act will be a virtual denial of his human nature; and should he escape a present punishment, he must endure heavy chastisement hereafter."

It is entirely erroneous to

consider the natural law as a series of specific and detailed precepts, a highly elaborate and previously determined solution for every difficult and complicated situation in life. As Jacques Maritain has so well pointed out, it is not "a ready-made code rolled up in the conscience of each one of us." (*The Rights of Man and Natural Law*). Rather, the natural law has reference to the first principles of the ethical order, to the fundamental canons of morality—what is right and what is wrong of its very nature. And in the normal development of a man's intellect he will arrive at a more complete understanding of the specific applications of that most basic of all the precepts of the natural law: "That which is good must be done, and that which is evil must be avoided." This does not, of course, indicate any change in the moral principles themselves, but rather a growth in the individual's knowledge of them. In the vivid phrases of one author, the natural law is "like the notion of beauty for an artist—it provides a criterion for evaluation; it does not furnish a recipe for manufacturing masterpieces." (O'Rahilly, *Moral Principles*).

Precisely because the natural law is concerned only with the underlying principles of morality, with what is intrinsically good or intrinsically evil, to provide a practical norm for concrete day-to-day living it

must needs be supplemented, not only by divine positive law, but also by human positive law—by the legislation of the state in matters temporal.

This fact of momentous importance cannot be over-emphasized—that human law is totally dependent upon the natural law, not only because it is an implementation of it, but also because from it it derives its very binding force. Human law can impose obligation, only because the natural law commands that the just precepts of a legitimate authority are to be obeyed. And it follows as a corollary that human laws which transgress the natural law, being contrary to justice, are possessed of no power to obligate. The natural law has its origin in God the Author of nature. Its purpose is to lead men to God. It exists as a necessary consequence of God's nature and of man's nature. Hence no other law may violate it and still justly demand obedience.

Such has been the universal persuasion of Catholic philosophers and theologians throughout the ages. The clear and concise statements of St. Thomas Aquinas are typical of Catholic teaching on this point. "Every positive human law is valid," he wrote, "only in so far as it is derived from the natural law." (*Sum. Theol.* I-II, q. 95, a. 2). "Man is bound to obey secular rulers, only in so far as the order of justice re-

quires." (*Sum. Theol.* II-II, q. 104, a. 6, ad3). This philosophy of law so forcefully and so uncompromisingly enunciated and explained by Catholic philosophers and theologians century after century—oftentimes in the face of bitter opposition and ruthless persecution—how profoundly has it influenced our own Anglo-Saxon legal thought. It was Sir William Blackstone, for example, the great English jurist, who wrote in his *Commentaries*: "The law of nature, being co-eval with mankind, and dictated by God Himself, is of course superior in obligation to any other. It is binding over all the globe, in all countries and at all times. No human laws are of any validity if contrary to this. And such of them as are valid derive all their force and all their authority, mediately or immediately, from this original."

There are millions and millions of unfortunate and ill-fated men and women and children all over the world today who are being pitilessly ground by the heel of despotism, because of the totalitarian philosophy of the rulers of a Soviet-dominated world that there is no higher law than man-made edict. Tyranny is the inexorable consequence of the abandonment of God and the rejection of the natural law. For if God does not exist, if there are no limitations circumscribing arbitrary power, then the only norm of right and wrong is

man-made precept backed up by force. Bound by no higher law, and being a law unto itself, it alone creates rights and hence can suppress them. This is the basis of totalitarianism and State absolutism in all its forms. For regardless of what differences may lie between Nazism and Communism, fundamentally the philosophy on which both are founded is the same—that there exists no higher law limiting in justice the enactments of the government, indeed that there exists no such thing as natural rights at all. Truly, "juridical positivism and state absolutism have transformed and disfigured the noble countenance of justice."

If we of the Anglo-Saxon world are inclined complacently and smugly to condemn as utterly foreign the concept of totalitarianism, surely we would be well-advised to consider carefully that the basic principle of its philosophy is unmistakably to be found in the writings of one of the most prominent of our English-speaking philosophers, Thomas Hobbes. This seventeenth century thinker whose theories are today enjoying an ever increasing authority in our colleges and universities, tenaciously held to the belief that the state is omnipotent, that morality originates only in positive law, and that the natural law is merely a primitive code of an aboriginal society. Governments, he maintained, "make

the things they command just by commanding them, and those they forbid unjust by forbidding them." (*Philosophical Rudiments*).

The frightful and horrifying practical consequences of this perversion of the nature of justice, and of the meaning of the natural law are evident today in the chaos and tyranny of the modern world. The ivory-towered speculative philosophical errors of three centuries ago have been all too minutely translated into the Red tyranny of today that enslaves more than a quarter of the inhabitants of the globe, and into the lavish shedding of the red blood of our fighting men that is crimsoning the ivory snows of Korean mountains and valleys in this tragic hour.

We in America must never cease to exercise constant vigilance. For despite the fact that our entire American tradition is saturated with the Catholic philosophical teaching on the nature of justice, of human rights, and of the natural law, nevertheless it cannot be denied that today there is a rapidly growing and extremely dangerous tendency among some political philosophers in our midst. Unquestionably it is traceable, at least in large measure, to an American jurist of a few decades ago—a man of the highest personal integrity and intellectual capacity, yet a thinker whose philosophy was

essentially relativistic and totalitarian, holding as it did, that truth is merely what the majority thinks if it has the power to enforce it, and that the human person has no significance—as he expressed it—"different in kind from that which belongs to a baboon or to a grain of sand." (O. W. Holmes in *Holmes-Pollock Letters*).

"Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for justice, for they shall be satisfied." (Mt. 5, 6). Without justice there can exist neither in the individual nor in society, that holiness and righteousness for which the followers of Jesus Christ must hunger and thirst. And there can be no true justice apart from a recognition of and a respect for the natural law.

O God, the Source of all rights, the Author of all laws, Thou Who art Justice itself, create in us a ravening hunger and a burning thirst for Thy justice. Help us to be just in our dealings with one another. Inspire our leaders and our thinkers with a realization that to be just, all law must be founded on Thy law. Instill into their souls a holy fear of that disastrous secularism which would make man-made precept the ultimate norm of what is right and what is wrong. In this hour when our country is exercising a world influence unknown in her previous history, raise up in our land men and women who will stand before mankind

as just and virtuous, endowed with a profound recognition that human rights are based upon Thy law, and inspired with the fearless courage unceasingly to do battle for their principles and if needs be valiantly to die for them. Help us all to understand that in this hour of crisis it is only by a return to morality based on the natural law that our civilization can survive. Infuse now

into our souls so avid a hunger and thirst for justice, that one day in Thy kingdom of justice there will be gloriously fulfilled in us that heaven-born prophecy of Thy servant of old: "They shall not hunger nor thirst, neither shall the heat nor the sun strike them: for he that is merciful to them shall be their shepherd, and at the fountains of waters he shall give them drink. (Is. 49, 10).

## BLESSED ARE THE PURE OF HEART

Address Delivered On March 22, 1953

For those who were His contemporaries and for every human being who would tread the path of life until the end of time, Jesus Christ the Son of God expounded the sublimest moral code within the capacity of the human mind to conceive. The destiny which He held aloft for attainment was eternal union with the Infinite God. The Model Whom He proposed for emulation was Himself, God incarnate. Noble and exalted were the precepts which He imposed upon men to obey; lofty and sacred were the counsels which He exhorted men to follow. To the toil-worn and the disheartened and the suffering, to those for whom life was "a galling load along a rough and weary road" (Burns), He offered a consoling haven of everlasting refuge which is Himself. "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavily burdened and I will refresh you." (Mt. 11, 28) To all mankind He extended a glowing invitation to the very summit of sanctity: "You therefore are to be perfect, even as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt. 5, 48).

There are none who can deny the sublimity of the moral code of Jesus Christ, and there are few who have made the at-

tempt. Even those who have fallen into error by misconstruing His message and misinterpreting His revelation, have been compelled to admit the nobility and the beauty of His moral doctrine. It was the rationalist critic of the last century, Ernest Renan, for example, who openly proclaimed: "The moral teaching of Jesus is the most beautiful doctrine that mankind ever received . . . Each one of us owes to Him what is best in himself." (*The Life of Jesus*)

This was His code—faith and hope and love of God and neighbor; meekness and sympathy and understanding, yet firmness and fortitude and resoluteness; hunger for justice and hatred for sin, yet charitableness of spirit and forgiveness of the sinner; humility and prayerfulness and denial of self, patience and resignation and zeal for the things of God. Vengeance He severely and rigorously forbade: "You do not know of what manner of spirit you are; for the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." (Luke 9, 55) Yet He hesitated not to sting with a burning rebuke, even His own Apostle, and anyone who would knowingly tempt another to omit

what was good or to do what was evil: "Get behind Me, Satan, thou art a scandal to Me; for thou dost not mind the things of God, but those of men." (Mt. 16, 23)

To the practice of this sublime moral code of Jesus Christ, every human being is called. "Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God." (Mt. 5, 8) Purity of heart comprises more than the observance of the demands of the virtue of chastity. It signifies singleness of purpose. It imposes the obligation to root out motives that are ignoble. It calls for the eradication of every ambition that is unworthy. It requires the suppression of every propensity to pride and envy and jealousy and deceit and double-dealing. "Who can ascend the mountain of the Lord: or who may stand in His holy place? He whose hands are sinless, whose heart is clean, who desires not what is vain, nor swears deceitfully to his neighbor." (Ps. 23, 3-4)

No one can study profoundly the moral precepts of Jesus Christ without realizing with abundant clarity that they are founded upon doctrinal truths. Over and over again He indicated unmistakably that action must be based upon belief, that conduct is the consequence of conviction, that there can exist no adherence to a code without acceptance of a creed. If He taught us that it is part

of His moral code to practice the virtue of faith, then there must be a creed to form the object of faith. "Go into the whole world and preach the Gospel to every creature." (Mark 16, 16)

If He taught us that it is part of His moral code to practice the virtue of hope, then there must be certain truths in a creed which will provide a secure and unshakeable basis for our hope. Only those who have a firm and unwavering belief in the Providence of God—it is only they who can hope; it is only they who can live from day to day without fear and anxiety and solicitude, always seeking first the kingdom of God and His justice, and understanding deep in their hearts that all other things will be added unto them. (Cf. Mt. 6, 25-33)

If He taught us that it is part of His moral code—yes, the very essence of it—to practice the virtue of love of God, then there must be a creed revealing the Infinite attributes of God by which He is deserving of our love without restriction, without limit, without reservation. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind, and with thy whole strength." (Mark 12, 30)

If He taught us that it is part of His moral code to practice the virtue of love of neigh-

bor, then it is because of the doctrine in His creed that our neighbor actually or potentially is a sharer in the Divine nature and tabernacles within himself the Triune God. "As long as you did it for one of these, the least of My brethren, you did it for Me." (Mt. 25, 40)

If He taught us that it is part of His moral code to practice the virtue of humility, then it is because we must believe that truth in His creed that the Infinite God of power and majesty stooped low to assume a human nature like unto ours in all things save sin, that the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity emptied Himself taking the form of a servant. (Cf. Phil. 2, 7)

If He taught us that it is part of His moral code to practice the virtue of self-denial, then it is because of His creed in which He has revealed the immortality of the soul, the existence of a hereafter, and the futility of gaining the whole world while suffering the loss of one's own soul. (Cf. Mark 8, 36)

If He taught us that it is part of His moral code to practice the virtue of repentance, then it is because there is a creed revealing that sin is a terrifying and awful reality, and that until the last farthing is paid reparation must be made by those who have been steeped in its guilt. "Unless you repent,

you will all perish in the same manner." (Luke 13, 3)

If He taught us that it is part of His moral code to practice the virtue of patience in suffering, then it is because of the doctrine in His creed that as God incarnate, in order to save mankind, bore the overwhelming burden of a cross of redemption on His scourge-torn and crimson-cruised shoulders, so we also must take up our cross daily and follow Him along the blood-slippery road to the altar of Calvary. (Cf. Luke 9, 23)

In a word, if it is of His moral code that only the pure of heart shall see God, then there must be a creed wherein He has revealed that there is a God, and that upon those who love Him ardently and serve Him faithfully there will be bestowed the heavenly reward of seeing Him forever and forever.

One of the most insidiously dangerous tendencies of the modern world is the attempt to divorce code from creed. Such an endeavor is fraught with peril; it is subversive of religion and destructive of morality. Oftentimes with the deepest sincerity, men and women of our age loudly proclaim such sophisms as: "There are many roads to heaven, and an honest man may follow any one of them." "Of what importance is it whether a man believe or disbelieve, provided he act in accordance with the demands of

the golden rule?" "Is not Christianity a code to be lived, and not a creed to be believed?" In the world of our day, so many ask us to fulfill the obligations of the moral precepts which were imposed by Jesus Christ; but they sweepingly cast aside the doctrinal truths which were taught by Jesus Christ. Forgetting that His creed is divine in origin no less than His code, they expect us to keep the Commandments of God, but they demand of us no belief that there is a God.

Theologically this position seems to have arisen as an extreme reaction to the sixteenth century error that men can be saved by faith without good works. Outside the Catholic Church today the prevalent teaching is that men can be saved by good works without faith. The revelation of Almighty God is clear—both are necessary. "He who does not believe shall be condemned." (Mark 16, 6) "Be doers of the word, and not hearers only." (James 1, 22)

Philosophically the dichotomy between code and creed is traceable to the Kantian doctrine of the autonomy of reason—that man's reason formulates the categorical imperative and imposes it with all the binding force of law; that the norm of right and wrong and the obligation to obedience are wholly independent of any Supreme external Lawgiver; that

in the final analysis, the power to enact a law and to demand its observance lies deep within the human breast.

Pushing the Kantian thesis to its ultimate conclusion, countless men and women of the modern world expound the doctrine that man is responsible for his conduct, not before the throne of God's justice, but only before the tribunal of his own law-enacting and law-imposing self. Only in a sense of personal satisfaction consequent upon duty fulfilled, only in a feeling of uneasy remorse resulting from evil perpetrated, only in the esteem or contempt of one's fellow-men following upon fidelity to or deviation from the social mores—therein alone is to be found the sanction for morality.

There can be no adherence to a code without belief in a creed. For the ultimate norm of the morality of conduct is its conformity with the Divine nature. Hence if all consideration of God be discarded, if religion—which is the bond between God and man—be swept aside, then with the destruction of its foundation morality must inevitably collapse.

God is the end or goal of all human activity. Destroy the concept of God, reject the truths of religion consequent thereupon, and human existence is rendered purposeless. Morality can never flourish in an atmosphere in which life is deemed

to be aimless, driftless, designless.

If there be no acceptance of the truth that God is the source of all authority, then no government can logically demand obedience to its precepts. And thus adherence to a moral code is reduced to a matter of mere expediency.

Without a religious creed, a moral code has no effective sanction. Human experience has taught that the most powerful motivation for good conduct is the deep-seated conviction that from a life of virtue there will accrue inevitably and unquestionably an eternity of happiness with God, and from a life of vice an eternity of misery without God. To check the wild upsurgings of the fiery passions that are lodged within the human breast, considerations of conventional propriety are woefully insufficient. In the vivid imagery of Cardinal Newman, one might as well endeavor to carve granite with a razor or to moor a vessel with a thread of silk.

It is perfectly true, of course, that all of us know some individuals whose morality is exemplary but whose faith is non-existent. Let us beware of hasty and illogical conclusions, however. Surely it is the part of sound reasoning to realize that in most cases such persons are vitally influenced, unconsciously at least, by those traditions of morality that are the out-

growth of laws and customs which our age has inherited from generations that knew no chasm between code and creed. Let us never forget that a branch cut from a tree, though alive no longer, does not immediately lose its freshness and its greenness.

There can be no adherence to a code without belief in a creed. This fundamental and overruling truth has been loudly professed throughout the ages. Centuries ago it was the Greek philosopher Plato who cried out: "He who destroys religion overthrows the foundations of human society." (*The Republic*). No American is unfamiliar with the stern warning of George Washington that "reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principles." (*Farewell Address*) And in our own day, perhaps we may turn to the salient observation of T. S. Eliot, that "for any man who thinks clearly, as his Faith is, so will his morals be." (*Thoughts after Lambeth*)

What are all of these human expressions of deep personal conviction, save a re-echoing of the inspired word of the Infinite God Himself: "Unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain who build it. Unless the Lord guard the city, in vain does the guard keep vigil." (Ps. 126, 1).

Blessed are the pure of heart

—those who fulfill the precepts of the moral code preached by Jesus Christ, because they believe the truths of the doctrinal creed taught by Jesus Christ. Because action is the consequence of conviction, the soil of this earth has been drenched with rivers of blood that streamed from the mutilated bodies of God-loving and tyrant-defying martyrs—hundreds of thousands all over the world in our own generation—men and women and children for whom faith was more important than life. Had they deemed it a matter of indifference, for example, whether the Crucified was a God-Man dying for their sins, or a huge impostor paying the price of His own crime, then likewise would they have deemed it a matter of indifference whether to bow in devout veneration before His image, or to cast aside the Crucifix as history's most fraudulent—though most persistent—hoax. Ultimately it was their faith that the Son of God offered His life in sacrifice for them, that prompted their love that they should lay down their lives in martyrdom for Him.

“Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God.” When time will have been absorbed into eternity, their ever-

lasting reward will be the Beatific Vision. But ever here, Almighty God bestows upon the pure of heart an extraordinary insight into things spiritual. They see God's beauty in the flower, and God's omnipotence in the firmament. They see God's eternity in the incessant recurrence of the seasons, and God's unchangeableness in the ever flowing sameness of the ocean's waters. It is the man who is pure of heart who, from the depths of that heart, can cry out in the strikingly beautiful words of the poet Joseph Mary Plunkett:

“I see His blood upon the rose  
And in the stars the glory of  
His eyes;  
His body gleams amid eternal  
snows,  
His tears fall from the skies.

I see His face in every flower;  
The thunder and the singing of  
the birds  
Are but His voice—and carven  
by His power  
Rocks are His written words.

All pathways by His feet are  
worn,  
His strong heart stirs the ever-  
beating sea,  
His crown of thorns is twined  
with every thorn  
His cross is every tree.”

## BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS

Address Delivered On March 29, 1953

Several months after the outbreak of the first World War, one of the most poignant and touching prayers ever uttered, overflowed from the heart of Pope Benedict XV. "Dismayed by the horrors of a war which is bringing ruin to peoples and to nations, we turn, O Jesus, to Thy most loving heart as to our last hope. O God of Mercy, with tears we invoke Thee to end this fearful scourge . . . In this hour, made terrible with burning hate, with bloodshed, and with slaughter, once more may Thy Divine Heart be moved to pity. Pity the countless mothers in anguish for the fate of their sons; pity the numberless families bereaved of their fathers; pity Europe over which brood such havoc and disaster . . ."

For four frightful harrowing years, endless streams of the blood of the youth of the world flowed on, to crimson the fields of Europe. The lives of eight and one half million combatants were sacrificed in that awful holocaust; twenty-one million human bodies were shattered by wounds, and fifty-seven out of every mobilized hundred, were listed as "casualties." "That flesh and blood should be so cheap!"

But when the rumbling of the cannons and the roaring of the guns and the clashing of arms had finally ceased, men truly believed that such an appalling blight would never again destroy the flower of manhood. For would not the memory of sacrificed lives, of blasted hopes, of broken homes, of devastated lands, of disease-ridden peoples—would not the memory ever remain green, ruthlessly to deter any future power-thirsty fanatic who might once again seek to plunge the world into the hell of war?

But if perchance the memory of the grim past would fade with the passage of time, would not the presence in our midst of a father or brother or friend who escaped from the slaughter of the Marne, or Chateau Thierry, or Belleau Wood, destined never to enjoy again the sight of a glorious sunset, or never to hear again the melodious song of the nightingale, or never to ramble again through God's green fields, or never to be able to use again God's highest gift to man, his reason—would not the very presence of such a man cry out to the world: "Civilization must never allow a recurrence of that inferno of horrors." Yes, men hoped and men

prayed that it would never happen again.

The cost in human life and human suffering had been prodigious. But were not they victorious who had sworn to all mankind that that was the war to end all wars? Had not those who fought to make the world safe for democracy—had not they vanquished the foe? The self-determination of nations, the rights of all peoples to choose their own governments, to live in happiness and concord and equity and peace and justice—were not these the lofty goals that had been solemnly pledged by the victors? And so, as the golden sunset looked down upon the final blood-drenched battlefield, men shuddered at the awful price; but men were convinced that the ideals for which they had done battle were finally to be realized.

Yet, scarcely had the clamor of clashing steel died away, when the Christian aims so glibly voiced during the height of the conflict were suddenly forgotten. The principles underlying the famous peace proposals of Pope Benedict XV were ruthlessly cast aside. The idealistic designs of sincere, God-fearing, peace-loving peoples were absorbed in the harder and more cruel realities of the moment. The same old power politics, the same cunning diplomatic intrigue, the same crafty maneuvering for a

balance of power, the same inhuman playing of one nation against the other; and on the other side, the rancor, vindictiveness, hatred, and craving for revenge, born of a defiant and sullen defeat—they all hovered menacingly over Europe and the world, until finally mankind was enveloped in another global conflict.

In the midst of the pursuit of selfish and secularistic aims, Christ was forgotten. For two post-war decades the scrapping of treaties, the refusal to abide by one's plighted word, lust for power and greed for aggrandizement, chicanery, deceit, propaganda, overweening nationalism—why these were accepted as the commonplace occurrences of an enlightened age.

And so, war came again. Mankind which on bended knee had pledged devoted adherence to Almighty God, once again found itself in the tentacles of a struggle more cruel, more cold-blooded and more inhuman than any which history had ever before recorded. And all, basically because for twenty years the world raced along a path absolutely at variance with the principles of morality, a path that plunged inevitably to war. For is it not true, as someone has expressed it, that "there will always be a Hitler where there is no Christ"?

I need not rehearse for you

the terrifying consequences of the second World War. You know them well—more than twenty two million military personnel and civilians buried beneath blood-muddy battlefields and crimson-dyed waters and bomb-devastated cities, as history's first all-out war obliterated the line of demarcation between combatant and non-combatant. I need not describe for you the grim and shocking picture of millions and millions who have come back, living wrecks. I need not tell you of the countless widows and orphans and mothers and fathers with grief-seared souls and—too often—discouragement-blinded hearts. I need not recite for you the heart-rending sufferings of the numberless displaced persons and dispossessed exiles—refugees from tyranny and torture. I need not recount for you the ghastly horrors of Siberian concentration camps and Buchenwald death chambers. Over vast areas of the earth destruction and ruin, and in the souls of countless men and women and children frustration and disillusionment, disheartenment and despair. And everywhere, fear. May it not all be summed up in one word: Hiroshima—the awful symbol of what a God-repudiating mankind can wreak upon humanity, and the terrifying portent of what a Christ-rejecting future holds in store for the human race.

And now we are embroiled in

a new war—the third within the lives of most of us. Whether or not it is a prelude to another World War, who knows? But in its train have come appalling pain and suffering and misery, and bitter anguish and grief and loneliness. It is a war that has aptly been described as “the worst in our history—not in scale, but in its almost unbelievable primitive intensity.” (Cf. *Reader's Digest*, June 1951, p. 9)

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God.” (Mt. 5, 9) Only they can make peace—peace in their own souls, peace in the home, peace in the community, peace in the nation, peace in the world—only they who fully understand that there can be no true peace apart from the acknowledgement of God's sovereignty, the observance of God's law, and the love of God Himself.

Jesus Christ the Son of God was a Peacemaker. He came upon earth to reconcile man with God. And because the Church is the prolongation of Christ in time and space, her mission is a mission of peace. She begins at the very heart of the problem. She recognizes that the problem of peace is above all else a spiritual problem. And to awaken that conviction in the minds and in the hearts of all mankind—that, in the unequivocal words of Pope Pius XII, “is in the first place

the duty of the Church and her primary contribution to peace today." (Christmas Message, 1951)

Insistently does she expound the doctrine of her Founder—that peace is not something static, it is dynamic; that peace is not merely the absence of conflict among individuals or nations, it is the presence of charity in action and the flowering of justice in day-to-day life. The reduction of armaments, the curbing of weapons that threaten to destroy the human race, the functioning of intricate and highly organized processes for the settlement of international disputes — these and countless other efforts of sincere men to achieve peace, are noble and commendable. But at best they are only secondary. Failure to realize the primacy of the spiritual in the establishment of peace is one of the most lamentable tragedies of our age. How terrifying is the indictment recently uttered by the Vicar of Christ: "God has answered this rejection of Christ by the plague of a permanent menace to peace and the frightening specter of war." (Christmas Message, 1951)

Peace in the individual soul? Is it not futile to expect that peace can thrive when God is subordinated to a creature, and His precepts are deemed secondary in importance to the whims of His subject?

Peace in the community? Is it not illogical to cry out in horror at the perpetration of violence and crime and murder, and at the same time to condone—or even to foster—the killing of the unborn because it is "therapeutic" or "eugenic" and the killing of the aged and the supposedly incurable because it is "merciful"?

Peace among nations? Is it not inconsistent to demand that nations remain unwaveringly faithful to their plighted word, and at the same time to allow the severing of a divinely sanctioned and indissoluble marriage bond between two souls who solemnly pledged themselves to each other until death should them part?

Have you ever paused to consider that even before the birth of Christ, the priest Zachary foretold of our Savior that He would "guide our feet into the way of peace" (Luke 1, 79), just as hundreds of years before, the prophet Isaias had proclaimed that the long-awaited Messiah would be the Prince of Peace (Is. 9, 6).

The very first announcement that was made of Christ's nativity was phrased in words of peace: "Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth among men of good will." (Luke 2, 14).

For three long years our Divine Lord trudged up and down the length and breadth of Palestine, announcing "the good

tidings of peace." (Eph. 2, 17) When the Samaritans refused Him hospitality, and when James and John with burning indignation cried out: "Lord, wilt Thou that we bid fire come down from heaven and consume them" they were silenced with this stern rebuke: "The Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." (Luke 9, 54-56)

The last legacy of Jesus Christ, as He took leave of the closest friends He had upon earth, on the very night of His Passion, was a legacy of peace: "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives, do I give to you." (John 14, 27)

And on that same night, as the impulsive Peter, with characteristic impetuosity, angrily drew forth his sword and cut off the ear of the high priest's servant, severely was He reprimanded by his Master: "Put back thy sword into its place; for all those who take the sword will perish by the sword." (Mt. 26, 51)

And finally when the ignominy of Good Friday had become glorified in the triumph of Easter Sunday, the very first greeting of the Risen Christ to His assembled Apostles was one of peace: "Peace be to you." (Mt. 20, 6)

Yes, our God is a God of peace. His Son is the Prince of Peace. And to those who love

peace and work for peace, He has promised His sublimest reward: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God." (Mt. 5, 9)

True to her mission, the Catholic Church throughout the ages has inculcated the principles of peace into the minds and the hearts of men. Philosophically she expounded the concept of peace as the tranquility of order, in the volumes of Augustine. Theologically she explained peace as an effect caused by the virtue of charity, in the tomes of Aquinas. Devoutly has she prayed for peace, and bitterly has she denounced war. It was the martyr pontiff Clement in the first century who pleadingly begged of God "to give to us and to all the inhabitants of the earth, peace and concord." It was Pope Nicholas I in the ninth century who thundered aloud: "War is always satanic in origin." It was the theologian Suarez in the sixteenth century who moralized: "The right of war is odious." It was our present Holy Father who cried out to the peoples of the world just a week before the outbreak of World War II: "Armed only with the word of truth, we . . . speak to you in the Name of God . . . in the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord . . . in the name of the Holy Ghost . . . The danger is imminent, but there is yet time. Nothing is lost with peace; all may be lost with war."

The Church does not teach, of course, that resort to arms is always wrong. Concisely has her doctrine been summarized by Pope Pius XII: "A people threatened with unjust aggression, or already its victim, may not remain passively indifferent, if it would think and act as befits a Christian . . . The commandment of peace is a matter of divine law. Its purpose is the protection of the goods of humanity, inasmuch as they are the gifts of the Creator. Among these goods some are of such importance for society, that it is perfectly lawful to defend them against unjust aggression. This defense is even an obligation for the nations as a whole, who have a duty not to abandon a nation that is attacked." (Christmas Message, 1948)

It is precisely to prevent unjust aggression that the Catholic Church has never ceased to preach peace, and never desisted from striving to make peace. Yet century after century she has seen the nations rise up against one another in savage and blood-thirsty conflict. Cen-

tury after century, she has urged, exhorted, entreated, begged that mankind be mindful of its fraternity in Christ. And though her efforts to preserve peace have oftentimes failed, though her endeavors to restore peace have oftentimes been derided, still today as for centuries past, from one end of the day to the other in every section of the globe, "from the rising of the sun even to its going down," with pleading prayer she storms the very heights of heaven: "Agnus Dei, dona nobis pacem: "Lamb of God, grant us peace."

O Lord Jesus Christ, Thou Who art Thyself our peace (Cf. Eph. 11, 14), Omnipotent and all-merciful God from Whom proceed all holy yearnings all right counsels and all just works, grant to Thy servants that peace which the world cannot bestow. May our hearts be dedicated to the observance of Thy precepts; may they be freed from fear of the foe; and may our times by Thy protection and under Thy guidance, be times of peace.

(Cf. Votive Mass for Peace)

# BLESSED ARE THEY WHO SUFFER PERSECUTION FOR JUSTICE' SAKE

Address Delivered On April 5, 1953

It would be no exaggeration to describe the twentieth century as the Age of Blood. Only the Omniscient God knows how vast is the number of innocent and heroic victims of the ruthless oppression and brutal persecution and inhuman martyrdom that have soaked our age with tears of grief and drenched it with rivers of blood.

Some few decades ago, for example, it was the misery-steeped peoples of Mexico and Spain who quaffed the bitter chalice of their Gethsemane and bore the crushing cross to their Calvary, as the Churches which they loved were dynamited and fired, the altars where they worshipped desecrated and profaned, their priests hunted out like desperate criminals and shot down in cold blood, their nuns dragged out from prayer-laden cloisters to fall victims to a degrading fate far worse than death. And among the laity, countless courageous men and valiant women to whom serving their God was incalculably more important than saving their lives—they were mowed down in savage slaughter, in order that their death might satiate the ravening hunger of a burning

hatred that blazed within the hearts of their fanatical persecutors.

From North to South, from East to West, the same frightful history is being written today in letters of blood. The direful consequences of the Black Death in medieval Europe almost fade into insignificance when compared with the ghastly terrors of the Red Death in the modern world. Truly, as the Catholic Bishops of the United States grimly declared at their annual meeting a few years ago, never before in history have so many men and women and children fallen prey to religious persecution.

The appalling torture and torment and blood-shedding that have cut deep and agonizing wounds in the Catholic Church of our day, have caused bitter suffering and grief and woe in the hearts of her children everywhere—but no surprise or wonderment. Such has been the fate of the Church of Jesus Christ from her very beginning, and such it will ever be. This did the Son of God, her Founder, predict. "If they have persecuted Me, they will persecute you also." (John 15, 20) "If the world hates

you, know that it has hated Me before you." (John 15, 18) "You will be hated by all for My name's sake." (Mt. 10, 22) "You will be brought before governors and kings." (Mt. 10, 18) "They will deliver you up to tribulation and will put you to death." (Mt. 24, 9) "Yes, the hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering worship to God." (John 16, 2)

The Church had scarcely been born when there was unleashed a series of fearful and harrowing persecutions that pressed upon one another in almost uninterrupted succession from the reign of the ferocious Nero to that of the apostate Julian. Men and women and children of every rank and condition of society were pitilessly subjected to the cruelest torments that diabolically inspired men could contrive. They were thrown to the wild beasts of the arena; they were cast into the raging waters of the sea; they were starved; they were strangled; they were beheaded; they were burned; they were scourged; they were crucified. And, in the horror-inspiring words of the pagan historian Tacitus: "Mockery was added to death. Clad in the skins of beasts, they were torn to pieces by dogs. They were nailed up to crosses. They were prepared for burning, so that when day waned, they might serve as torches." (*Annals*, XV, 44)

Since that first Good Friday

when the sun hid its face in a blackened sky lest it gaze upon the awful crime of men persecuting and murdering their God, never has it risen and set without its being fated to look down upon some gaping wound in the Mystical Christ. Every age has had its heroes who lived for Christ and died for Christ. Typical of their unwavering and indomitable loyalty to their Master is the martyr-saint Thomas a Becket of the twelfth century. To those who endeavored to induce him to yield, this was his uncompromising answer: "Far from me be this folly. May God keep me from the madness of ever being persuaded by any argument to negotiate the bartering of the body of Christ. For thus I would be like unto Judas who sold Christ." (Ep. 130)

And so too today. All over the world, those who have dauntlessly refused to yield or to compromise have been mistreated and oppressed and abused; they have been beaten and whipped and tortured; they have been mocked and ridiculed and derided. Their words have been distorted; their reputations have been blackened; even their minds, with diabolical cleverness and cunning, have been tampered with, and their mental faculties rendered incoherent. "It is one of the common characteristics of the persecutors of all time," sadly declared our Holy Father a

few years ago, "that, not satisfied with shattering their victims physically, they aim also to render them despicable and hateful to their fatherland and society. Who does not remember the first Roman martyrs, of whom Tacitus speaks, sacrificed under Nero and represented as incendiaries, abominable evil-doers, enemies of mankind? The modern persecutors show that they are docile disciples of that inglorious school." (Address to the Roman people, April 3, 1949)

On this very afternoon, somewhere in far-off Hungary, as a symbol of persecuted peoples everywhere, there lies languishing behind prison bars, weak and faint, garbed in the rags of a criminal, an intrepid successor of the Apostles of old. His name? Cardinal Mindszenty. His crime? He dared to defy the tyranny of the Communist state. He dared to defend the God-given rights of the individual. He dared to profess his faith uncompromisingly as a Catholic. He dared to love the Lord his God with his whole heart and with his whole soul and with all his strength and with all his mind. "I stand for God and country," he fearlessly proclaimed, as he read clearly the unmistakable omens of his own tragic destiny at the hands of his persecutors. "For this is the historic duty imposed upon me by the tradition of my country, the most orphaned nation in this world. Compared to

my nation's bitter anguish, my own fate is of no importance. I do not accuse my accusers. If at times I must explain the situation, my explanations are but a pouring out of the tears, a bursting forth of the pains, a trembling sense of the righteousness of my people. I pray for a world of justice and charity; I pray for those who, in the words of my Master, know not what they do. I forgive them from the bottom of my heart." (Cf. *Catholic Mind*, March 1949, p. 187)

Let us turn our gaze to the other side of the world for still another heroic symbol of the persecuted Catholicism of our age. Amid the stench and horror of a Communist prison in China, into which he had been thrown after having been paraded in scorn and ridicule through the villages of South China, in February of last year the martyred American Catholic Bishop Francis Ford offered up his life as a missionary victim for Jesus Christ. "O Lord," he had fervently prayed more than thirty years before when first he set foot in China, "grant us to be the doorstep by which the multitudes may come to worship Thee. And if in the saving of their souls, we are ground underfoot and spat upon and worn out, at least we . . . shall have become the King's Highway in pathless China."

The ultimate reason why the Catholic Church is being perse-

cuted today, why the Catholic Church has been persecuted for nineteen hundred years, and why the Catholic Church will be persecuted until time is no more, is simply this. Because of her very nature as the Mystical Christ, it is her mission to suffer even as did the physical Christ. The Catholic Church, in the striking words of Bossuet, "is Jesus Christ prolonged in space and time and communicated to men." (Cf. Gruden, *The Mystical Christ*, p. 2) It is God's divine plan that in the distribution of the merits of the Redemption won by the physical Christ, the Mystical Christ must reproduce the life and sufferings of the Son of God which transpired nineteen hundred years ago in Judea. And just as Jesus Christ was at war with the spirit of the world, so too His Church must be at war with the spirit of the world. For Him that war brought pain and suffering and agony. It can be no different for His Church. Her members can glory only in a thorn-crowned Head. In her history, far more frequently is it the Christ of Calvary than the Christ of Thabor Who cries out to mankind. Thus it has ever been. And that is why St. Paul could write that "the sufferings of Christ abound in us." (2 Cor. 1, 5)

The Mystical Christ must be at war with the spirit of the world. Upon her the Son of God solemnly imposed the tre-

mendous obligation to teach, to rule, and to sanctify, to preach the message of Jesus Christ to all peoples in all places and at all times—without omissions or deletions or additions or alterations. And because she has never ceased to preach the divine revelation in its entirety to all mankind, she has constantly been at war with the spirit of the world. For the spirit of the world is directly antithetical to the teaching of Jesus Christ. In the disquieting and disturbing and terror-laden words of Holy Scripture: "The mystery of iniquity is already at work." (2 Thess. 2, 7) And so in St. Paul's instant and solemn admonition, the disciples of Jesus Christ must not be conformed to this world, but must be transformed in the newness of their minds. (Cf. Rom. 12, 2) They must come out from among the children of the world and be separated. (Cf. 2 Cor. 6, 17; Is. 52, 11) Indeed so bitter, so relentless, and so persevering a war must the Church wage against the spirit of the world that the Son of God Himself has spoken this dread-inspiring warning: "Woe to you when men shall bless you: for according to these things did their fathers to the false prophets." (Luke 6, 26)

The antithesis between the Church and the spirit of the world is not something superficial or transient. It touches the very roots of reality. It impinges upon the most basic

truth of all human existence—the relation of man the creature to God his Creator, a relation that necessarily involves the obligation to know God, to love God, and to serve God. “Worthy art Thou, O Lord our God, to receive glory and honor and power. For Thou hast created all things, and because of Thy will they were and were created.” (Apoc. 4, 11) “Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and strength to our God forever and forever.” (Apoc. 7, 12)

And the spirit of the world? Why to countless moderns the idea of God is a myth. Even among many in so-called Christian nations, to profess atheism or at least agnosticism is smart and fashionable. The idea that God has a place in our lives and that His law must influence our conduct—that concept is ridiculed and scoffed at as a preposterous anthropomorphism deriving from the superstition-steeped Old Testament or from the priest-ridden Middle Ages. Religion, they tell you, is emotional trash, sentimental nonsense. And if perchance there be some pallid and timorous and faint-hearted personalities who must lean upon the crutch of religion to be shored up emotionally, then above all else they must be broad-minded, they must not be dogmatic, they must take scrupulous care lest they offend the feelings of their religion-scoffing friends

by enunciating what are erroneously termed religious truths.

This is no exaggeration; this is no hyperbole; this is no flight of fancy. The spirit of the world? This is the spirit of the world. In his volume entitled *Is There a God?* a professor from one of the best known Divinity Schools in this country defines God as “that interaction between individuals, groups, and ages which generates and promotes the greatest possible mutuality of good.” (H. N. Wieman of Divinity School of University of Chicago) Writing in a theological review some few years earlier, a professor from one of our Eastern colleges uttered this categorical and definitive assertion: “No one except the uncritical adherents of traditional dogma believes today in such a God as the ancient Jews worshipped; and it is doubtful if many really believe in the grim potter-God of St. Paul. Mature thought . . . must put away childish things.” “The question has become, not can we believe in this cut-and-dried conception of medieval and modern orthodoxy, but rather is there any conception of God that we can accept.” (D. Drake, “Seekers after God,” *Harvard Theological Review*, Jan. 1919, pp. 81, 68)

The spirit of the world? This is the spirit of the world. It is the calm and confident prophecy of the eighteenth century

philosopher Voltaire that within one hundred years the Bible would become obsolete and would disappear entirely from circulation. It is the definitive and doctrinaire pronouncement of the nineteenth century philosopher Feuerbach: "It is as clear as the sun and as evident as the day that there is no God and that there can be none." (Cf. Lonergan, *The Menace of Atheism*, p. 9)

The spirit of the world? This is the spirit of the world. The essayist and historian Thomas Carlyle chancing upon a wayside crucifix as he roamed through the woods—perhaps pityingly, perhaps cynically, thus addressed the Son of God as he gazed upon this representation of His human form nailed to the cross: "Poor fellow, your day is over." (Cf. Shuster, *The World's Great Catholic Literature*, p. x)

The spirit of the world? This is the spirit of the world. Two years ago the Soviet newspaper *Pravda* allowed one of the most highly placed leaders of one of our Western democracies (British Foreign Secretary Herbert Morrison) to contribute an article for publication, setting forth the views of the West. And, incredible though it may seem, his message to the Russian people failed even to advert to religion.

The spirit of the world? This is the spirit of the world. At the United Nations headquar-

ters in New York, in the little chamber set aside for meditation—set aside finally in consequence of the determined and tenacious insistence of those who are profoundly convinced that there can be no peace without God the Author of peace — scrupulous care has been taken that this "Meditation Room" contain no single article of any kind to remind one of religion. And so it is furnished with a flag, a pedestal, and a bowl of flowers. (Cf. *Time*, Nov. 10, 1952, p. 98)

The spirit of the world? This is the spirit of the world. In a recently published book, a number of prominent American personalities give expression to the fundamental beliefs that guide their lives. What a tragic and telling index it is to the frightening decline of the influence of religion in our day that scarcely half of the contributors even mention God. (*This I Believe*)

The spirit of the world? This is the spirit of the world. It is the shocking and outrageous remark of one of the nation's most renowned scientists that if "Thou shalt not kill" is a law of God which convicts a euthanasian of murder, then "let us have done with such a savage and subhuman deity." (E. A. Hooten, in *Boston Traveler*, Jan. 6, 1950)

The spirit of the world? "You need not be told who is the enemy, nor what garb he

wears. He is among us all and everywhere, subtle and dangerous . . . At first he says: 'Christ, yes; but the whole Church, no.' Then: 'God, yes; but Christ, no.' Then finally the cry goes up: 'God is dead; in fact, there never was any God.' "

This is not my description of the spirit of the world. These startling words are not mine. This is the calm and deliberate utterance of His Holiness, our present Pope. (Address to Italian Catholic Actionists, Oct. 12, 1952)

"Blessed are they who suffer persecution for justice' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Mt. 5, 10) Over and over again this theme is reiterated in the Gospel pages. "Amen, amen I say to you, that you shall weep and lament . . . you shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy." (John 16, 20) Is not this the tremendously consoling lesson of Easter Sunday: that just as for the physical Christ there would have been no glory had there been no shame, no Easter Sunday had there been no Good Friday—so too for the Mystical Christ which is the Church, and for every soul who has trod the path of suffering, this is the magnificent benediction of Jesus Christ: "Blessed are they who suffer persecution for justice' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Like the physical Christ, so the Mystical Christ has cease-

lessly been at war with the spirit of the world. She is bathed in the sweat and blood of Gethsemane; she is crowned with the thorns of Pilate's soldiers; she is pierced with the spear of the Roman centurion on Calvary's hill. But the Crucifixion was only a prelude to the Resurrection. So too for the Mystical Christ. For this tremendous and overwhelming pledge of Jesus Christ the Son of God, the Neros and the Elizabeths and the Stalins of all ages have been utterly helpless to eradicate from the hearts of their blood-drenched victims: "Your sorrow shall be turned into joy."

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the earth. Blessed are they who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for justice, for they shall be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God. Blessed are they who suffer persecution for justice's sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Mt. 5, 3-10)

This is the lesson of Easter Sunday, the paradox of Christianity—that the kingdom is to be purchased by poverty, as St. Augustine so strikingly ex-

presses it; "joy by sorrow, rest life by death." (*Ennaratio in*  
by labor, glory by disgrace, and Ps. 93)

## THE PURPOSE OF THE CATHOLIC HOUR

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

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

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

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

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

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