

THE CATHOLIC HOUR

LIGHT ON THE PATH

BY

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The second in a series of addresses by prominent Catholic laymen entitled "THE ROAD AHEAD," delivered in the Catholic Hour, broadcast by the National Broadcasting Company in cooperation with the National Council of Catholic Men on June 9, 1946, by Fulton Oursler, an editor of the Reader's Digest. After the series has been concluded on the radio, it will be made available in one pamphlet.

National Council of Catholic Men
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CAPAM

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We have seen that the trend of the nations in their approach to the future has seemed to bend toward evil rather than good. Each day the need for moral leadership grows more nakedly visible. We behold that need in every failing and collapsing power of the prime ministers, as in Paris and London; with every compromise and stale-mate in the Assembly sessions of the United Nations here in New York.

Greed and fear and hypocrisy, yes, and even hatred, and scorn for principle, can no longer be concealed from the dullest eye. The international discord is loud enough to jar the ear-drums of the deaf. Yet the stern, clear voice of conscience speaks in the souls of common people everywhere. They want their leaders to make peace. In many places, we are hearing that moral leadership of all mankind should be assumed by the United States.

The question is, are we capable and deserving of such leadership? How stand matters with our own conscience? Toward what destination is our country headed? Whither goes the great Republic? Have we, in our national life, demonstrated such moral force and strength that

we may admonish the rest of the world?

At first glance, it would surely not seem so. If ever there was a time when moral leadership was needed at home, it is now. Today the problem of character education is concerning far-sighted men and women in every field, precisely because in every field there is the inescapable evidence of internal moral collapse. If I had hours to speak, there would still not be time enough to recite the penalties already visited on our national life solely because we have turned our faces away from plain and simple duty.

We are living through a year of formidable and dangerous strikes. Are strikes immoral then? Men are driven to strikes by immorality. Force is always the confession of moral failure. And that is what a strike is—the employment of force, of superior power to make sure that you get what you want. The fault may lie with a greedy or power-crazy employer or with an equally greedy or power-crazy union leader. Often it lies with both. Where the blame lies is incidental; the fact remains that when all negotiations fail, and the strike order comes, there can be but one conclusion—on one

side or the other, someone wanted too much!

The black market! Who would dare defend it in principle? Who will not admit its corruption? Yet who does not patronize it? All too few! The black market is caused by the meeting of two immoral forces—in him who buys is gluttony or pride or covetousness; in him who sells is greed.

Juvenile delinquency! Examine into its causes and you will find first blame laid by all authorities on the doorstep of home. Further, you will find the home weakened to its deepest foundation by three modern devices of evil—a conspiracy of mutual infidelity, regarded as modern and sophisticated; separation and divorce. And these destroyers of family life are born of deadly sins; they rise out of lust and anger, covetousness and pride. Who will deny that juvenile delinquency represents a moral breakdown in our national life?

As for crime—does an intelligent American audience need to be reminded that, no matter what trophies we win or lose in international sports, we never lose our trophy as the world's champion in crime? Since I began talking into this microphone

there have been committed in the United States 21 crimes. I do not mean minor offenses or misdemeanors. I mean highway robbery, murder, arson, kidnapping, and other crimes of violence. Every 22 seconds of all the minutes, of all the hours, of all the 365 days of the year—three major crimes a minute is our average. The cost to you and me, as taxpayers, is more than fifteen billion dollars a year.

That is four hundred percent more than we spend for education. It exceeds all our normal taxes. It figures down to one hundred and twenty dollars a year for every man, woman and child in the United States.

Yet, even as a matter of dollars and cents, the average citizen is cynically indifferent to the situation. He thinks the cost of crime does not reach him personally. He thinks he does not pay any part of this underworld bill. He is very much mistaken. Because of the police and courts and prisons, but more especially because of racketeering in business and industry, every American citizen is taxed to keep the criminal army going. There is a crime tax on every meal we eat, on the hats and coats and shoes we wear, on our rent, laundry,

moving picture tickets—on almost everything.

Clearly, if we could cut that cost only in half, we could pay a large portion of our defense bill without further expense of any kind. Only a strange public apathy to this disease of democracy prevents us from greatly reducing our annual crime bill, a bill reckoned not only in billions of dollars but also in untold human misery and death.

In twelve months nearly one million five hundred thousand violent crimes were committed in the United States—robbery, assault, burglary, larceny, kidnapping, manslaughter, murder. These figures are from the Federal Bureau of Investigation of the Department of Justice.

Take murder as an example. In one year eleven thousand and nine hundred criminal homicides were committed. That was at the rate of thirty-two murders a day, more than one murder every hour. In that same year there were more than fifty-five thousand robberies and forty-six thousand assaults. That is why we have to finance one hundred and twenty state and federal prisons, four thousand city and county jails and ten thousand police lock-ups, with a prison population of half a million.

And when we realize that only twenty-two percent of the criminals who are put on trial are ever convicted, and when we further consider the percentage of unsolved crimes for which no one is ever tried, we begin to get a true understanding of the extent of this problem. Nor can we tell the police they are not on the job; they will retort that the prison population has increased more than eighty percent in the last ten years.

In suggesting that the United States assume the moral leadership of the world, who can ignore this unparalleled and factual picture of our own immoral record?

For much of this, we may hold accountable the secularized education in our public schools. You can teach about banks and labor unions, about hospitals and orphanages, about public buildings and art museums, but you dare not say one word about the churches and synagogues in the community—for that would be religious instruction. In this nation religious instruction in the public school is illegal. It is a crime to teach about God. Is it any wonder that millions of Americans are religiously illiterate, that they entertain a negative prejudice towards religion?

In the name of separation of church and state a havoc had been wrought in public schools that would make our founding fathers turn in their graves. We have deviated a long way from the principle of the Northwest Ordinance — “religion, morality and knowledge” are “necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind.”

The one grave question of the future is—in what direction will this country go? Whither the United States? Far beyond our boundaries that riddle is important. To many it must seem that here is the last sanctuary of freedom; if the fires lighted by Washington and Jefferson and Lincoln die out on this hearth, then there will be no fire in all the world to warm the hands of freedom. The greatest opportunity the United States will ever have is right now. We have the chance to better the world by setting our own home in order. By being true to ourselves we shall give the rest of the world its greatest moral example. No iron curtain can hide that example forever from men’s eyes.

What then shall we do to be true to ourselves as we seek to go down the road of the future? Again, as always, while the details may be complex, the whole

is simple. Our duty is never hard to understand, if we face problems honestly. In the teachings of our Church there is light on the path.

As a nation, we must help the rest of mankind. Not within our means but beyond and far beyond our means. We must overcome in ourselves the sin of gluttony, and, forgetting the full dinner pail, the two chickens in every pot, two cars in every garage and such cheap-jack appeals to the stomach and well-being generally. We must go the second mile, we must give not only our coat but our cloak also. We must never be able to sit at banquets and forget that millions of babies perish for food that we can spare them. The nation must go back to God.

For the pride of nationalism, we must prefer the humility of heavenly citizenship under our Father, Almighty God who has made us brothers and sisters to red men, yellow men, black men; one family. We must not only abjure covetousness in our own national policy but we must refuse to be a party to it in immoral deals with other powers. We must not be an accessory to the fact of another nation stealing its neighbors’ land or resources. Yet in all this, we must

lock up anger so that it cannot destroy us. In meekness of spirit, we must be firm as the saints were firm; meek as they were meek when they were burned to death for the faith that gave them strength to die as martyrs. For envy, we must turn to brotherly love.

Let the world see in our eyes as we meet the scrutiny of other nations, charity and patience, fidelity and mercy. Let them know that we are sincere in our high ideals, because we practice them at home.

To practice the virtues and works of mercy here at home, as they are taught in our Holy Mother Church can be the only right road into the future for us. Let us in our domestic life go back joyously to the sanctity of the home, and return moral and religious education into every school room. These are the very first steps on the road that will lead us forward in achievement—because it leads us back to God. Let us be Christians and pray to the Holy Ghost for wisdom and understanding; fortitude and the fear of the Lord, which, so we were taught of old, is the beginning of wisdom.

Let us be Christians and seek, as the fruits of the Holy Ghost, all patience and goodness and

joy—for that, too, belongs to the Christian.

Let us remember and practice the Beatitudes as uttered by Our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount. If we are truly Christian we shall be poor in spirit, not lauding ourselves over others; we shall mourn not only over our own sorrows but over the sorrow of our fellows, and know that they, as well as we shall be comforted. Mourning over the sorrows of others means that we care about all the social injustice that man has worked upon his brothers and his sisters. We shall hunger and thirst after justice—and having found it, we shall practice also the Beatitude that comes right next to justice—"Blessed are the merciful!" We shall be clean of heart and we shall be peace makers—and if it becomes necessary, we serve notice on the world, we are ready to suffer persecution.

And let us be so Christian that in all the struggles that seem to loom on the road ahead, we shall most surely avoid these final, horrible ultimate sins that cry to heaven for vengeance. Let the world never forget what are those sins, worst deeds of all, sins that cry to heaven for vengeance. Wilful murder! Naturally! All would agree to that.

The sin of Sodom. Yes! But the other two! Let all the church-haters and atheists and missionaries of class hatred, and stirrers up of working people against their brothers be reminded of this—the two remaining sins that cry to heaven for vengeance, in the glorious historic position of the Catholic Church are—oppression of the poor and defrauding laborers of their wages.

Let us be Christian and practice these virtues in our domestic

life. Their observance is a part of our Christian duty. Let America as a nation go back to these first principles. By practicing them, we shall have taken the only sure way to moral leadership, because we shall be practicing morality before we seek to impose it on others. Until we do that, all admonishment to the rest of the world will avail us nothing. The way to moral leadership is to lead a moral national life.

THE CATHOLIC HOUR

1930—Seventeenth Year—1946

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

The Catholic Hour was begun on a network of 22 stations, and now carries its message of Catholic truth on each Sunday of the year through a number of stations varying from 90 to 110, situated in 40 states, the District of Columbia, and Hawaii. Consisting usually of an address, mainly expository, by one or another of America's leading Catholic preachers—though sometimes of talks by laymen, sometimes of dramatizations—and of sacred music provided by a volunteer choir, the Catholic Hour has distinguished itself as one of the most popular and extensive religious broadcasts in the world. An average of 100,000 audience letters a year, about twenty per cent of which come from listeners of other faiths, gives some indication of its popularity and influence.

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