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THE CATHOLIC HOUR

OUR COUNTRY'S QUEEN

BY

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The first in a series of addresses under the general title of "Hail, Holy Queen," delivered in the Catholic Hour, broadcast by the National Broadcasting Company in cooperation with the National Council of Catholic Men on April 28, 1946, by the Rev. J. Hugh O'Donnell, C.S.C., President of the University of Notre Dame.

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OUR COUNTRY'S QUEEN

When the three little ships commanded by Columbus set out from Palos, Spain, to find a new route to the Indies, they sailed in a period of history when almost all the seamen of Christendom made a custom of closing the day with evening prayers. Just before the night watch was set, the ship's boy trimmed the binnacle lamp and then led all hands in reciting the Our Father, the Hail Mary, and the Creed. Then the ship's company sang the "Salve Regina"—Hail, Holy Queen—their favorite hymn and prayer.

Columbus mentions the "Salve Regina" in his Journal—this song, old even then—with which the Blessed Mother was saluted each evening at sunset. I do not suppose that it was always sung well; but we may be sure that it was always sung with a fervent good will. In those times of frail sailing ships and uncharted oceans, when so many voyages were ventures into the unknown, sailors were the most religious workers on land or sea. Their life in the immensity of sky and water kept them close to God, and they were unafraid because they had faith in divine protection. They dedicated themselves to Mary, the Star of the

Sea, and daily asked her intercession. They even told the time of day as being before or after the Salve Regina Hour.

"Hail, holy Queen, Mother of Mercy, our life, our sweetness, and our hope! To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve, to thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears. Turn, then, most gracious advocate, thine eyes of mercy towards us; and after this our exile show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus. O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary."

Such is the ancient hymn. The Blessed Mother has heard it addressed to her countless millions of times since it was first sung in the Benedictine monasteries of the twelfth century. Next to the inspiring Ave Maria itself, it has always been the world's prayer to the Blessed Virgin. It is a canticle deeply spiritual; simple and beautiful, as all deeply spiritual things are. More than any other prayer, more even than the touching "Memorare" of St. Bernard, it shows the position that the Blessed Virgin has in the Divine Pattern.

There is nothing of the idolatrous in the Catholic devotion to Mary. It has often been mis-

understood, so I should like to make it crystal clear to our non-Catholic friends and also to refresh the memories of Catholics as well.

Mary is the Mother of God, and Catholics honor her as such. We do not worship her in the sense in which we worship God. Adoration is for God alone. But we venerate and revere Mary because of her great dignity and position. We know and steadfastly maintain that she is after all but a creature of God, and that as a creature she is possessed of no grandeur, no holiness, no power save such as her Creator bestowed upon her. Our veneration for Mary, great though it may be, is always on a level far below the worship and adoration which we pay to God alone. Adoration to God; veneration to Mary, His Mother. Yet this veneration can never be exaggerated, because it is derived from her dignity as Mother of God.

When we say that the Blessed Virgin is the Mother of God, we affirm our belief in two things: first, that her Son is true man, else she were not a mother; secondly, that her Son is true God, else she were not the Mother of God. As the great Cardinal Gibbons wrote many

years ago: “. . . the better we understand the part that Mary has taken in the work of redemption, the more enlightened becomes our knowledge of our Redeemer Himself . . . the greater our love for her, the deeper and broader is our devotion to Him. . . . Experience also testifies that our Saviour's attributes become more confused and warped in the minds of a people in proportion as they ignore Mary's relations to Him.”*

Today our country has need of Mary the Mediatrix, and it is only natural that we should turn to her for help, for we are hers in a very special sense. The United States was dedicated to her by John Carroll, the first Bishop of Baltimore, when he was elevated to the episcopacy in 1790. The Bishop's diocese extended from Maine to Georgia, and westward to the Mississippi; in other words, all the territory the United States then embraced, for Spain still held Florida, and the Louisiana Purchase was still thirteen years in the future. And the dedication by this saintly man, who was a living illustration of the fact that Christian principles are American principles, was more than a formality.

* Gibbons, *The Faith of Our Fathers*, p. 45.

As he lay dying in 1815, the venerable Bishop said: "Of all things that gave me most consolation is that I have always been attached to the practice of devotion to the Blessed Virgin, that I have established it among the people under my care, and placed my diocese under her protection." In the generation that followed Bishop Carroll's death the bond between Our Lady and the Church in the United States became steadily stronger. In 1846—just one hundred years ago—there met in Baltimore the Sixth Provincial Council which sought and received permission from Rome that American Catholics be allowed to select as patroness the Queen of the Immaculate Conception.

This series of five discourses will portray the Blessed Mother in the national scene today in the opening words of the "Salve Regina" as Hail, Holy Queen—our Country's Queen. She is the Mother of Mercy. She is our life and sweetness, and finally our hope.

For a moment, let us turn back the years to the time when the New World was indeed new. Let us turn the motion picture camera of history on Mary in relation to America, particularly the United States. "Our Land

and Our Lady," to use the words of Daniel Sargent, is our pageant of history.

We have already touched upon the scene aboard the Santa Maria, and upon the sublime confidence that Columbus and his men had in the intercession of Mary. Now let us rapidly follow in the footsteps of the explorers as they made their way into the wilderness of the New World, bringing with them that same faith, and leaving its seeds after them as they interwove the Immaculate Conception of Mary into our earliest history.

There was Lucas Vasquez de Ayllon, who led an expedition from the West Indies northward along the Atlantic coast until he came to a great estuary that he called the Bay of the Mother of God. We know it now as Chesapeake Bay. DeSoto came from Spain to Florida, and thence went to Georgia and Carolina and westward through Tennessee past the mile-wide Mississippi. Up the west coast of Mexico came Coronado, swerving east until he came to the Rio Grande on September 8, Our Lady's Birthday. He called it Our Lady's River. In a later day, Father Junipero Serra was to leave his indelible imprint upon California, spiritualizing it with its

twenty-one missions — many of them dedicated to her—extending, as he said, like a procession for six hundred miles.

From the northeast came the French, whose love of Mary was as deep as that of the Spaniards. When Louis XIII dedicated France to the Blessed Virgin in 1638, his act was not merely an appeal for help, but was an offer of service to the Mother of God. The Sulpicians founded the city of Montreal — Ville-M a r i e de Montreal. The first chapel erected in Quebec was dedicated to God under the invocation of Mary Immaculate. Champlain mapped Plymouth Harbor and called it St. Louis a generation before the English pilgrims came. Pere Marquette, of whom it was said that every deed and every day of his life was important or unimportant to him in terms of his devotion to the Immaculate Conception, was the first to realize the importance of the Mississippi as a waterway. To him it was the River of the Immaculate Conception.

Of the thirteen original colonies, only one was truly a civil and religious sanctuary, and that was Maryland. Officially, perhaps, the name was a compliment to Henrietta Maria, queen of England; but in the minds of

those who found refuge there, it referred ultimately to the Queen of Heaven. The unique colony was literally Mary's Land. The first settlement was St. Mary's.

Our Land and Our Lady! Our Country's Queen! By their devotion to her the pioneer priests covered the land with the protecting mantle of Mary. And because they had recourse to her, their labors were blessed with success. Saintly men, great men all, whose thirst for souls could not be slaked, whose love for the Mother of God was unbounded, they have been an inspiration to succeeding generations. Because of their zeal there came in time the beginnings of ecclesiastical organization, the establishment of the hierarchy, and the institution of the primatial See of Baltimore, where the first cathedral was appropriately named in honor of the Immaculate Conception.

Through succeeding years came schools, hospitals, orphanages, sanitariums, and homes for the aged, all dedicated to Our Lady. Under her guidance they have prospered; under her patronage they have survived the plagues of fire, famine, and epidemic. Their heroic achievements are beyond human explanation. They stem from the divine, from

the consecration of the Church in the United States to Mary, the Mother of God, the Queen of the Immaculate Conception. The dedication has a direct bearing on the natural growth and development of the country; spiritually, in souls saved; and, materially, as a strong civilizing agency.

Today our country yearns for peace, peace, and there is no peace. The world cries for peace, peace, and there is no peace, because God and the moral law have been forgotten. Is it any wonder that the world is weary, confused, heart-sick? It is like a ship without a rudder on a storm-tossed sea. It is in the throes of revolution as two forces, those of God and those of anti-God, struggle for supremacy in a battle in which there can be neither compromise nor armistice, because truth, whence all basic principles flow, cannot be compromised.

The impact of the struggle is being felt here in the United States. From the cradle to the grave millions of our people are trying to get along without God. They profess no religion, or actually belittle and even deny God's existence. As a result, morality, for them, is not fixed and objective, but relative and subject to

change with time and circumstance—it is a kind of cafeteria morality. A national examination of conscience shows that the family unit is breaking down because so many fathers and mothers neglect their parental responsibilities. They are, in fact, more delinquent than the juveniles whose delinquency they deplore. Yet the nation can be strong only as the family is strong. And there are other causes for grave concern: Much of our Christian heritage of education has been discarded in favor of a system of secularism that does not educate man in the light of the hereafter, but only trains him for the here and now. Planned parenthood and race suicide flout God's holy will. Divorce is made easy by statute. There is a disregard for authority bordering on contempt as the virtues of obedience, honesty, and integrity are consigned to the limbo of neglect.

Still there is no reason to despair, to think that all is lost. Personally, I have great confidence in the large number of Catholics and non-Catholics who still believe in God and the moral law. They constitute the leaven of the masses, and it is this leaven which can readily form a "new paste," to use the scriptural

expression. They serve as a base for a spiritual regeneration.

Hence, there is still hope, and that hope may be further strengthened if we but have recourse to Mary, the Mother of God, Queen of this nation, Queen of all nations, Queen of Peace. On bended knee, we ask thee, O Mary, to have compassion on a war-sick, weary, confused world. We are willing to undergo our daily Calvary, if you will but tap for us the eternal well-spring of Redemption and let flow the rivulets of grace on your sons and daughters who have forgotten their Creator and Re-

deemer, the true source of all help and strength.

And although we know that we have not here a "lasting city," that we seek, "one that is above," still we beseech thee to ask your Divine Son to give us surcease from strife, bickering, and conflict among nations, so that a breath of peace may come again to this tired and heart-sick world. To this end, we pledge a daily recitation of your canticle of love, hope and intercession. "Hail, holy Queen, Mother of Mercy, our life, our sweetness, and our hope."

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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454