APRIL 11, 1937

I greet you all, noble countrymen and countrywomen, with the words: Let Jesus Christ be praised.

On Holy Saturday of Passion week I returned to Buffalo, from a week’s pilgrimage to Pennsylvania. Immediately in the afternoon I began my visit to bless food. For quite a time, I had known honorable and honest families, to whom I wish to give my thanks, so I visit and bless Easter foods as is the custom. My visits took me from noon until 5 in the afternoon. After I returned to the rectory, I remembered that I missed on family who lived but a few blocks from the Church. I threw on my habit and my well-worn coat and was on my way. On the other side of the street, I observed two young men. One looked as if he were 20 years old; the other 17 or 18. Both were dressed elegantly and both formidably drunk. One held the other by the arm. Rather he held him up erect and paced with him. I crossed the street out of curiosity. The one helping the other was himself under the influence but was morally advising the one he was helping. “Where did you get so drunk? You don’t even know what day it is. If you knew, you wouldn’t have gotten drunk. Today is Holy Saturday. Don’t you know that? You don’t even see the children taking their Easter baskets to Church for blessing.” The stopped in their tracks and weaved side to side. Slowly knees bend thanks to the big heads and one fell to the ground. I hesitated a bit behind them. A group of children appeared on the scene. They circled the two youths. Today when I was thinking about the theme of my upcoming homily, this scene presented itself to my mind: Two drunken young men on Holy Saturday. On the vigil of one of the most celebrated Christian Feasts when the entire world was preparing itself to celebrate the resurrection of Christ, these youngsters stood on the edge of death, physical and spiritual. I don’t think I would be exaggerating if I said that this scene would be a true depiction of American youth. And it’s a drunken scene. It hesitates, falls, and gets up. It goes forward unsteadily, unsure, and unconscious. It is imbued with the views of people apparently learned, but in fact, the shallow, in addition to being angrily contrary and what’s worse Godless. They are guided by the principles of brutality, violence, mischief, indulgence. The concept of teaching our youth lawlessness, dressed in the crown of personal freedom and scientific acceptability. In this way they remove the foundations of sober principles, sober teaching, and a sober life. They poison the intellect, the conscience and the hearts of the present generation which lives, things, speaks and lives drunk. I understand that more than one Polish youth do not like my characterization. Never mind that. Please listen patiently to today’s thoughts under the title:

DEMOLITION – DEVASTATION – DEATH

First, I posit several general principles which are easy to understand. The world is in desperate need of God and God’s commandments. It is not enough to agree that God exists and along with Him a set of commandments. The world needs to admit these principles publicly and practice them. Otherwise humanity itself becomes destructive and dies as a consequence. Today, already no unseen hand, points out these principles, and we could visibly notice the results of a fearful prophetic stance. You need not believe me since some sort of one sided polish religious is trying to convince me. Listen to what Dr. W. Terpenning, the famous American sociolog, said not too long ago in March of this year: “America has some crimes that are practically unknown in other civilized countries. These include racketeering, lynching and kidnaping, which are American inventions. The United States is generally recognized as being the most criminal of civilized nations and most shocking fact of our criminal record is the rapid increase of serious crimes since 1900. The foreigners are better citizens, than their children” – (translation here) Day after day throughout the entire year 72 American citizens commit suicide. Annually over 21,000 hang themselves, poison, drown or in some other way take their life. Some American writer claims that “religion plays an important role in the tendency toward taking one’s life. The highest degree is found among protestant persuasions, the lowest degree among Catholics. Jews take a middle road between these two. Statistics gives us certain numbers, among which in such countries as France, Italy, England, Belgium and others despite the natural increase in population, crimes diminished by 50 percent, and here in our country, rose 100%. Listen to what the learned Doctor Henry B. Busch has to say in this matter: “America annually spends 5 million dollars on crime; that’s what crime costs America. The greatest number of these crimes is perpetrated by youth in their 19th year of life. If America gave one million dollars annually in the interest of rearing children, it would organize and accomplish this task admirably and would save 4 million dollars. However America is not interested in doing that and so the number of crimes rises insanely each year. We say proverbially that America is a country of golden possibilities, but it is an empty sentence not backed up by statistics. What possibility is there for the youth of this country when 5,500,000 young people have no jobs, and 300,000 youth have come down with such a downcast spirit that they do not seek jobs? When a young person permits himself the perpetration of a crime, we send him to a so called “reformatory” they reform him in such a way that when he leaves he becomes a hardened criminal. 64,000,000 people in this country do not have a higher education and 32 million did not graduate from public schools.” In February of this year English writings have published this information: “Four youths were held by Police in Los Angeles, Calif., for robbing a corpse. It was a body of a man in his middle years, a veteran the World War, who died in an automobile. These youths found the corpse in the car, took $115 dollars and drove away with his remains to an airport near the ocean. They spent the money they had stolen and did not forget the stolen body. They took it away to an out of the way place and dumped it.” In Hamtramack on Saturday on the 6th of March 1937, a seventeen old girl was coming from church to her widowed mother, whom she was helping monetarily. She never reached home. On Sunday morning at 9 o’clock she was accosted chocked to death. The mother, in the midst of despair cried out, “She was the best girl in the world.” – In Tacoma, Wash., a child was robbed and killed. In Vermont, boys, one six year old, the other seven, murdered and drowned a 5 year old girl. Here in our Buffalo, who hadn’t read the news of the murder of a young citizen a couple of months ago? The murderer was an 18 year old. The Polish Daily in Chicago : “In the great hall of the criminal court in Chicago played out the drama of a youth, full of life’s possibilities, named Schuster, who spurned everything and everyone, gambled and lost everything, his happiness and that of those he loved. The tragedy was full of lessons for young people, who lose track and lose themselves in the chaos of crime. Judge Lupe, before pronouncing sentence spoke these words, “You are guilty of the crime of murder. For compensation for your criminal act there is only one punishment. I looked at the whole of your life in the hope of finding one extenuating circumstance but found none. Your record is full of robbery after armed robbery. You killed a man while robbing. The state authorities gave you a lenient sentence in the hope that you would avoid going back to your criminal ways. My obligation is to sentence you to death. The young man listened to the sentence quietly and whispered in a very quiet voice: Thank You, Judge. What a tragic ending to a life story. Thank you, Judge for death.” So ends a hell-bent road of crime. A young man thanks for his death and the book of life ends forever. In these and similar events various learned men take out the tomes of learning and knowledge and give pedagogical, biological, anthropological and psychological and psychiatric reasons for behavior. They talk about the level of the mind, which is so widely known today as the American mentality. They claim that in the United States there are more than 6 million adult people who have the mind of 6 year old children; that the great part of the rest are twelve or thirteen year old children. Most clearly and most accurately and without any boundaries, the real reason was given by an Englishman about which I read in a British monthly and which I remember well was: “our modern American youth is nothing more or less than a crowd of sophisticated ignoramuses: or (translation) … From our point of view however there are other factors which have contributed to our sad state of affairs. I add a summary of Fr. Peter Mellerski, chaplain at the Attica Prison, who writes to me thus: “The average prisoner is 23 years old. Egotistical, empty, immoral, dark of intellect are his main characteristics. 233 went to Catholic schools for two or more years; 312 from government schools; 39 did not go to any school, 21 did not go to Confession or Holy Communion; 117 were married by justices of the peace or lived in illegal unions; 207 did not attend church before coming to prison; eight percent suffer from social diseases, mentally defective, mentally dull, and 108 psychopaths ruined completely by alcohol. Ostensibly a large portion is Catholics. A larger portion is only nominally church members. One could say that they are without religion. The main reasons contributing to the making of criminals are: 1. Families who are separated by divorce or disagreement. A child education in such a home finds itself in a hostile environment. It doesn’t have proper care and feels unwanted. It recognizes the fact that children rears by good parents are loved, have certain comforts and a happy family circle. After years of deprivation and thought about its life and it knows that it needlessly suffered. He harbors the harm done to him and feels a sense of revenge. Growing up, he begins to have issues with authority which is salt in his eye. He hates discipline, is a pessimist without ideals or ambition, becomes an enemy of society, perpetrates crimes and ultimately ends in jail. 2. Careless, self-loving, and indifferent parents. The father and mother are not concerned what the child does, with whom he associates, and where he spends his free time. The children, then, do not care about the home, because there is no order there so they seek entertainment beyond the home, often in immoral companionship. In such an environment they grow like a wild weed and develop a loose character because the parents did not turn their attention to the fact that there is a moral law which demands attention to authority. There is in Attica a man beyond his 40’s. He is the father of seven children. He had been sentenced to three years for theft and a dissipated life. The oldest son is 24 years old and sits with his father in prison accused of theft. A younger son is in reform school in Elmira, also for theft. His given reasons according to him: “Our home was always in poverty, because our father loved to drink and mother had to go to work. No one cared for us. We wore torn and dirty clothing. In school our teachers ignored us and other children laughed at us. I didn’t care for school or the church because I didn’t have nice clothing and no money. At times I was hungry so I stole what I could. Father was always drinking and we went out into the break yards to pick coal and wood. One day they arrested my brother and me and took us to Elmira. From time to time I began my careless days and ended up with my father whom I hate because I blame him for being in jail.” 3. Movies and sensational journalism which depicted criminal life. I guess everyone knows that these days there is more written in the press about bandits and criminals than about hard working people in the social structure. These things have a deleterious effect on young minds. A lively imagination in youth paints a picture of an easy life without work or concern. It gives birth to a young man imitating things like making a gun out of wood, play acting the bandit. That seemly childish play is nevertheless the first step to a criminal career for more than one child. Psychologists maintain that an impression on the mind in youth is difficult to erase from the mind. If the boy is very impressionable, surely he may fall under the influence of that kind of thinking and go the wrong way. At a meeting of lawyers in Milwaukeee, Wis., a Joseph Keenan. Assistant to the procurator General of the United States, “the problem of crime in America will slowly rise, unless the press, the media like the motion picture and radio stop depicting criminals and the public does not awaken from its complacency and remedy the situation. It is worth adding here the stern criticism of and British write, who maintains that nine out of ten American novels are written by authors whose minds are equivalent to the mentality of seven to 14 year old children. At least 90 percent of radio programs are void of any kind of spiritual growth and American films in the greater part are a poison to the intellect and to tender souls. Despite that, young mothers, for hours spend time reading various s mod magazines or with child in hand several times a week hurry to theaters, to sate themselves with their beloved heroes and heroines. 4. Perhaps the most important contributor is the lack of moral, religious training of children. Dr. Christian, the founder of a correctional school in Elmira, N.Y, claims that the neglect of religion and the lack of esteem for church and civil authorities is the greatest contributor to creation of a criminal class. Religion insists respect for authority and certain restraints for evil inclinations. Unless there are ethical principles, there is no esteem or character, only blind egoism, which steps on the highest tradition and makes man into a wild machine without control and is bad for social structures. Dr. Thayer writes: “Avoidance of crime has to begin with youth. If man keeps his esteem to age 25, then it is very easy to him to become a criminal.” There exists today a great need of well reared children, but more importantly there is a need for enlightened parent, capable to rear children in a sensible way. It is easy to foretell what our children will be, if we only remember the plain words of Holy Scripture: “A good tree bears good fruit, and by their fruit you shall know them. 5. It is also important to remember that today’s youth, instead of reach for the teaching of the Catholic Catechism; they turn to Freud, Adler, and Schopenhauer. Here they read that every human being is not responsible for any wrong doing, since in a human system there are certain glands that shove humans to certain actions and justify them. And later? And later “And if this life does not your hopes fulfill – you are free to quit it when you will - Without the fear of waking!” And that agrees with the principles of Ernest Haeckel, who claims that “every person has the right to end his or her suffering – by suicide. A certain typesetter came home after a meeting at a society of freethinkers. He became angry at a crucifix hanging in the living room. His young wife knelt on her knees and begged him not to take the view of the crucified Savior off the wall. Angrily he pushes both women away takes off the crucifix, breaks it and throws it into the fire. Sneeringly he calls out: “Out with this superstition. I can’t afford to permit the authority of the priests to enter into my home.” The elderly mother retrieved the broken cross from the fire and going out of the house, uttered, “My son did this, my son!” One day several years later, some prisoner went leisurely to the prison chaplain. He came to tell the chaplain that he received a letter which informed him of the death of his mother. It was the same man who years before had torn the cross from the wall, broke it, and threw it in the fire. The prisoner with broken voice swallowing his own tears said: “Reverend Chaplain! Once I had a very good wife and loving mother. Now my wife doesn’t want anything to do with me, got a decree of separation because I mistreated her. She took the children with her because she didn’t want to raise them without religion. I drove my sweet mother to the grave: He forgot he was in the presence of the chaplain because he was talking to himself with such a sadness: Once I was happy and one day, when I came back from a meeting I destroyed a crucifix and with it all my happiness. Please, Father, give me a crucifix. If societies and governments wished to give their youths crucifixes. If the sight of that cross was found in every home, in every family, and in every soul. Soon there would be a change in social life and in the life of society’s people. More importantly there would be a significant change in the lives of our youth. From this youth would come forth obedient sons, model daughters and model citizens of the country? There would be less wayward men in prison cells and more peaceful obedient citizens to God and country. Nothing else will help to save the erring youth, neither education, nor knowledge, nor culture. Civil law helps little. The one hope to aid our youth nowadays from deadly consequences is the cross of Christ.