APRIL 4, 1937

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

Out of duty and necessity, I pass through New York City occasionally. I need to change trains while travelling when going to the New England states. I usually have some time between trains. I then pause to observe the faces of the travelers in the station. Curious portraits pass by, and even more curious thoughts weave their way through my mind. Think of a panorama of people’s faces. Reflected in those faces are all sorts of emotions, goodness, peace, and contentment; patience and good will; and again reflected is anger, impatience, craftiness, agitation, and doubt. There are faces which reflect goodness, peace and contentment, angry and dissatisfied faces, contrary faces. Some beckon, some repulse. Some absorbed in thought. There are few smiling and happy faces. All the passengers are preoccupied with trouble, difficulties, and duties. Looking at all of these countenances, I come to the realization that every one of us lives in two worlds. In this wide world, there is the individual and but an ant among millions, a little bee, a fragile moth or grain of sand. In that world every human being could be and in fact is worth something and needed for something. He is and then he is gone. He is born into the world. The world could care less. Man lives with no interest from the rest of the world. Man dies. The world continues on. It seems as if he never really was – the big zero, nothing. Each of us, of course, thinks differently. Why is that? Because we live in another world, a small, organized, and personal world. We are not too concerned about that other world. So our world weaves a tale of the second world. Here lie our thoughts, our dreams, our work, our interests, and our efforts. So each of us things of the self; does not want nor does he know how to turn from self and our own troubles, so as not to have the eyes of the soul look beyond one’s own life and see that others suffer and what they have to bear in terms of their crosses. Each one thinks that he alone suffers, has troubles, and that his problems are the greatest; why do we not realize that we could go behind this thick skin of ours and realize the difficulties of others. There is so much trouble in our contemporary world. It would profit us to understand our humble position and the thankfulness we should have. There are other profits obtained from these realizations.

THE CROSSES PEOPLE BEAR

Today, I add a new string of letters. Naturally, without mention of names and places, for well-known reasons. I begin: “Dear Father: With sadness I admit that we are children without a father and mother. We live that way for twelve years without the care of parents. Actually, for the last twelve years our father and mother have been drunk. They are so inured with drinking day after day that we have the worst hell on earth at home. Has God abandoned us? There were eight of us. Now three have their own families. We children are thin and emaciated. I am so enervated with the whole situation that I know not what to do. As I write this letter both parents lay drunk. Drinking is the only thing they think about. Nothing wakens them except drink. When I bought new bed ware, my father sold it for liquor and drank it with my mother. We have bills to pay for food. My sister and I worked for a year in New York but were fired and we returned home. We sent money home for assistance but our parents drank through all of it. When my mother got drunk she got argumentative and sometimes beat us. I fear that someday our father will kill us; he already threatened us. We can’t sleep at night because when he comes home he throws us out of the house, curses, and wakes up the neighbors. The days are not better. Our father argues with our mother and she curses father. They live only to drink. Father, will you have a program telling parents not to drink to drunkenness.” This letter has this original complimentary close: “The poor and abandoned children, who should not have been born.” On that same theme the daughter writes: “I am writing for the second time, to ask Father to talk to our parents. I am a young girl, who just finished a Polish Catholic school. I am not working so it is difficult for me as well as my parents. There are four of us at home. The eldest works but is engaged. Our parents make ashamed for their actions. Both our father and mother are almost the same age, about 50 years old. They believe only in the flask. Each day they need beer and whiskey and if they didn’t have it they would be ill. It saddens me to see my mother get drunk daily. I could see my father drinking but it looks terrible on my mother. They sit away the evenings drinking until midnight. Others hear about it and bring us shame. When in company mother never refuses a drink unless her stomach just doesn’t allow any more. When people see that, they laugh and whisper about it. Will you talk about such mothers who drink plain whiskey; women should only drink beer. Mother’s complain about their sons and daughters go to taverns and get drunk and do it themselves. The result is that mother and fathers have nervous conditions and are crabby. Everything is in their way, they chase after everything, everything is bad with them and they then holler at us. I know, and I have been taught that to talk about our parents is bad, but to whom can we go? I cannot tell everything but if you saw how it was when our parents were not drinking, you would say it was a garden of Eden and now it is life in hell. Please, Father Justin, talk to parents and especially to every mother and ask them not to drink because drunken mother will pervert the world. Be with God, Father. I will pray daily that my mother with forsake her poisoning whiskey.

One more voice of complaint. This time it is in the English language. I ask your patience while a read this letter: Dear Father Justin: As much as I dislike the word, this is a letter of complaint. Complaint against myself, and the family and the home. Due to the up-bringing and the immediate environment of the home, I am right now a “flop” in the game of life. There are seven of us; the parents, five children of which one is married, and at that before a non-Catholic minister. We have a father, yes; but only in the technical sense of the word. Why mother married him, I do not know. His daily solace and love and god, is the bottle with that brown fluid.

From morn till night he goes to work, and how he has held his job so far, I do not know. He is one of the big sores on my heart. With the exception of the sister who is married, we have living together, the parents, two girls and two boys, including myself. I am 21. Practically, I have never had a job, except the CCC camps, a couple of years back. Brother, who is younger, stronger bigger physically, works. Therefore he is petted and idolized by Mother. How we all have lived together for so long is almost a mystery; there is no harmony whatsoever. Constant quarreling and arguing, is the daily menu. The girls are younger than we boys, still they are hard to handle. My mother cannot control the youngest one – how they argue with each other! – And she is only fifteen! And believe it or not, there is hardly ever a word between brother and me. We’re flesh and blood, total strangers! But that is partly my fault, which brings in my own mental state. I hardly speak in the house. My mind is very fragile. So often I am in a daze – no job, no place to go - nothing to do. Day after day, just sitting and hoping. At this rate, I am an almost certain candidate for insanity. More and more father’s drunkenness and the family discord are taxing my nerves. How long will this hell last? – When will it end? Physically I am not up to par. No energy, no ambition. My memory is bad, my will is very weak. And I’m only twenty one! As much as I am dependent on my Mother, mentally seeking – for in this way I have been brought up, do you think I should leave home to go by myself when I get a job? For now, there is nothing left here for me. Because of my joblessness, I am somewhat forsaken. With all my physical weakness, I must look out for myself. It seems I am not worthy of care, even though mother knows, there is obviously something wrong with me. But I do not want to blame her; I owe so much to her. I do not like to speak against them, but my life is so terrible among them. Please advise me what I should do.”

On these three letters, I am advising all the parents. Dear Father and dear mother. Drunkenness is a low and despicable weakness. The drunkard brings forth some sympathy and from some others disgust. Drunken Father, you forgive your never sated desire for drink. The health, peace and happiness of the whole family is in jeopardy because of you insatiable desire to drink. You foster a bad name because it changes you into a liar, a thief, a scandal and a disbeliever. He is as though a murderer because he ruins body and soul. He tortures his wife and children, cuts off their happiness, ruins his health, makes their life hell, in few words, he sows a disease in the house and beyond the circles of the hearth. Are we to wonder that above the graves of these parent alcoholics hover the curses of their children? That so many unhappy children put into these difficult circumstances attribute their problems on fathers who were drunkards. If we look upon the drunken fathers with askance for their drinking, then the portrait of a mother drunkard fills us with disgust. Mother is a holy word; drunkard portrays something degrading, fallen, brings us indescribable emotion. Several years ago I had seen with my own eyes for the first time a Polish woman addicted to drinking. One winter evening, I finished my work at the club office. It was nine in the evening with a heavy frost outside. Snow flakes were falling. A cold wind seemed to chill the blood. I exited the club and was heading hurriedly to the cloister. Coming toward me is a lady who is drunk. A little girl, who was only about ten years old, leads her. The glare of the street lamp sheds light on this pitiful scene. The small girl saw me and, obviously out of shame, crossed on the other side of the street and hid in the shadows of the houses. The drunken middle-aged lady was bare-headed. Her eyes glistened like two hot coals. She leaned on a fence for stability. She started to cough loudly and spit. As I stood near the entrance to the cloister, the little girl, looking to the right and to the left, returned to her mother, took her by the hand and proceeded to guide her homeward! What a life must exist in the homes of similar mothers! Fathers and Mothers, make a resolve! Father, in the eyes of your children, you are a hero. Mothers, in the views of your children you are a heroine! You children hold you up as models to imitate; they look upon you as if it were saints with reverence and respect. The son proudly asserts you as his father and wishes to be like you are; wants to do what you do, wants to live like you do! In that small head of his, his imagination focuses upon you, you are his father! Would you want to add to that his estimate of you if you are a drunkard-father? Or, Mother Dear, do you understand that in the eyes of your children you are holiness itself. On your life your daughters want to model their own lives. They think you are the best mother because you are their mother. Do you want to be remembered as their drunken mother? Here I end the issue.

I continue with another letter: Dear Father: In a nutshell I will tell you of my unhappy marriage. I came from Poland and the Lord blessed me here in this country. At twenty seven years of age, I married. She was a native Pole. Even at the outset of the marriage, she proved to be quick to argument and disagreement. I could not satisfy her. Our arguments lasted two or three days. After that she would refuse to speak to me. I continually had to beg her forgiveness. I thought that things would change for the better. In the meantime, things worsen. Generally, for the last five years, the situation was intolerable. She now curses me. In addition she curses my mother whom I never knew. What’s worse she burst forth before the feasts of Christmas and Easter. Even when I go to church meetings to societies that I belong to, she does not like it. When I return tired from work she starts before dinner to make snide remarks, curses and does not use polite language. Sometimes this enervates me so that instead of eating at home, I go out to a restaurant. I could write a book about our unhappy marriage. I think I have done just about as much as I could and I cannot go on further. However, I fear two things: First, the first of our children are now getting older and beginning to understand our disagreements. What is on their minds? Secondly, not being able to cope with the situation, they will do something worse. I think the best thing to do is to get a separation.” One can gather, from this letter that the wife is like rust, which eats away at marital love, until she destroys it completely. A jealous wife toys with suspicion, makes unneeded aggravation, seeks occasion for quarreling and ends up uprooting the basis of the marital state. St. Augustine writes: “Jealousy threw the Angels from heaven and our first parents from the Garden of Eden. I add: jealous wives expedite from the home: satisfaction, peace, and happiness; they foster quarreling, hatred and discord; they open the door to litigation, and sometimes lead to suicide and murder. And now a letter on a different note: Dear Father Justin: the appeal to workers, and not to the rich, to promote the Rosary Hour was of interest to me because If see and understand that Fr. Justin doesn’t wish to sing the songs from abroad. What is keeping our priests or whoever they fear in order in these times to air the truth to the poor people against the soviets, the rich or the contrary leaders? Therefore why not foster and promote the talk before the working people and air for the worker what he can do and to what the working man has a right to, in order that these people would have the possibility of a proper wage to live a descent life, to be able to better raise a family and not to send children to work before the appropriate time. It is for this reason that there would exist a freedom to bring home more than just the necessities. There are so many candidates or jail and other situations because of poverty. Dear Father, do not be surprised that I write these things, because these injustices perpetrated on the poor working man wounds the heart, while you father have the possibility to make a difference in repairing the harm by pointing out the abuses of management and the poison being spread upon these unfortunate people. Please forgive me, Father, because I don’t want to preach to anyone except to those who ought to be teachers and leaders of the people and who ought to always and everywhere promote making things better when they see something deleterious in the social structure. And now please accept this humble offering and say a prayer for my health, which I need restored, and release the poor people from this bondage of poverty and ill treatment. I will also be praying for creativity in the teaching and enlightenment of the poor and helpless as well as blessings of the Lord in your ministry and strength in adversity. May you always speak boldly and without hesitation.”

To this heartfelt emersion into the care of the Polish worker, I add from my point of view, that I will willingly and without fear teach our people about this situation, always in mind of Christ’s teachings, and not according the radical teachings of those without heart, who work for their personal selfish goals who teach the worker to revolt leading to the shedding of blood. Justice shall always guide my ways, never vengeance. Enough of this.

I will read one more letter in the English language: Dear Father Justin: I am fifteen years of age and I am a student at the local high school. I have two brothers and a sister. My oldest brother has a very good position and earns a good salary, but the worst part of it is, that he never wants to support our mother. He gives her a few dollars, and the rest he spends all, when he goes out at night and stays out till morning. Mother cries and prays, but it never does any good for he never listens to my younger brother also earns a good salary, but he too instead of contributing to the support of the family, goes out at night and gambles his money away. Many times, mother reminds them to be good, not to stay out nights, and not to gamble, but they only answer her, that they are both old enough to take care of themselves. Father, your talks over the radio, have done more good, than you can imagine. I am sure that if you read my letter it might strike at the hearts of sons and daughters and teach them to become good children” –

After drunkenness, I don’t know if there is another addiction worse than gambling. Today it is a particularly real disease. Not infrequently it leads to other excesses such a theft, cheating, falsifying checks and it ends with a trial and prison. Children who do not take care of their parents, according to their means, and do not take care of them in their old age, and are unthankful have to pay dearly with their happiness and health. Children, always have a big heart for you parents. God with not forget it!

One more description: “I am sixteen years old and I am the oldest of the children. There are three other children in the family. We have such a sad family life that I am afraid to complain about it publically. Our parents are always angry at each other, and sometimes they do not talk to each other for weeks. Mother often locks the door to the bedroom do heat would not enter the room. When they get into a spat, mother throws utensils from the table at him. Whatever she gets ahold of she throws at him. She forbids us to talk to our father or even prevents us from waking him to go to work. Our father has suffered so much with Mother that when mother was sick she was angry at him. My heart hurts for Father so that when I go to bed, I cry myself to sleep. I can’t say anything to my mother because she would beat me if I complained. I am too young to leave home and live among others.”

Listen, daughter! You better go to your Pastor and forcefully but sincerely tell him the whole story. I believe he will look into the situation and will seek a change for you not only what you seek for but what is necessary in your case. God help so that you mother will change her ways and become a good and agreeable mother.

These few letters, which I have read to you illustrates that difficulties are always visiting human beings. Everywhere there are hurting people who complain and cry. The life of a human being is always difficult to fathom. No animal or bird will treat its own species as man can treat his fellow man. Man is said to be created in the image of God and he has an immortal soul, yet he brings upon himself unneeded suffering. The world revolves constantly and people change and miss life. Considering this how thankful we should be to God for the countless blessings He provides us with. We should thank Him by living life as he would want us to live.

I ask our listeners from Hazleton and surrounding area, to refrain from turning off your radios on Hazleton’s station WAZL, because Rev. Francis Dominiak from Hazelton will follow this program with some words on a very important matter.