April 30, 1944

Dear fellow countrymen and countrywomen, I greet you with the words: Praised be Jesus Christ!

War times produce various results and fruits. Some are healthy and health-giving. Others are not only distasteful but poisonous. New teachers appear from nowhere, new wise men, new saviors. In reality they offer neither food nor drink, nor enlightenment or faith and hope to the mind, heart and soul of the people. Despite their taste of honey they leave one empty, indifferent, and worse off. It is a curious and mysterious thing, that those apostles and teachers of this ilk are drawn to our people. Some come under the pretext of care for the worker. They tout some kind of paradise on earth. When they meet they talk about class rights, battle and injustice or hate. Here and there they verbally attack the Church, Spirituality or the Pope. They do destructive work. They undercut moral principles which are the bedrock of order and cooperation but also Christian civilization. Other go from home to home, door to door, attempting to make Catholics better Christians. What a contradiction and absurdity! They have their own interpretation of Christ’s teachings. In one breath they say that “Do not Kill” is contrary to every war, yet they work in factories that produce arms. And they quote text after text of the Old Testament. In their eyes, hell does not exist they announce the end of the world: the reign of the Antichrist. They know everything, explain all difficulties and solve all problems. And they still have an ear for their thinking. And so we come to our talk”

 BE ON GUARD

 Christ reprimanded the doctors and the Pharisees. He called them “hypocrites” “similar to whitened grave markers which on top look beautiful to onlookers but inside they are filled with the bones of the dead and ugliness.” “And so it is with you who appear to be just but appear to be justified but are filled with ugliness.” – Snakes…lizards, shame on you. And so the angered Savior exited the sanctuary and went to the Garden of Olives. His disciples came to him and asked: tell us when everything will end. Jesus replied “ Be on guard that no one deceives you. Many will come in my name saying, “I am the Christ”. You will hear of wars and wars to come. It all will still survive. Nation will war against nation. The will be wars and rumors of war by nations and kingdoms. Many false prophets will arise. Do not believe them. There will be great signs and they will perform miraculous deeds. No one knows the exact day or hour. The Fathers knows. That is the teaching of Christ. That is plain and clear to us.

 There is a saying among the Jews: whatever happens ultimately will resolve itself for the good”. Among the Polish people there is a saying: “God’s Will!”

 A certain American reporter spoke to a young rabbi about the atrocities of war. The rabbi maintains that despite the fact that the world war brought about so much suffering to people, it brought so many souls back to God – because it convinced people that in the life of each person there comes a moment, sooner or later, a fearful moment, when man is found all alone, completely cut off from others, except from God. He is confronted one on one with his God. This is the conviction of chaplains of various persuasions. They all experienced a mass return to God. Today, more people pray, and pray more earnestly than ever before in the history of the world. No one will deny that Providence permitted the sacrifice especially in the last 50 years; mankind had moved away from God. America was not excluded. It had strayed from the notion of God amidst false teaching and materialistic ways. That sad fact evidenced itself in private, public, and international ways, covering the entire world. People sought a life of comfort. Sundays and weekdays served for outings without dropping into church or chapel. For that reason, all of us, interesting and joy producing-insight is a mass interest in God and prayers.

 The reported maintained that while traveling she talked with chaplains of various persuasions from, England, Scotland, Whales, and Northern Africa, as well as those who had returned from the south. All agreed as with one voice namely that those in the service from the general to the highest ranking recruit how seriously they look upon prayer with success. Gernal MacArthur, said it in one sentence, “There are no atheists in the foxholes of Bataanor Corregidor!” What are the results of these soldier prayers! And to what extent did the world come back to God? Here are a few facts, taken from conversations with the chaplains. It was in the first days at the battle for Tunisia. The British were getting quite a thrashing from the enemy. The losses of wounded and dying were great. Two British soldiers came to the chaplain – John to go to confession and Joe to make fun of the practice of confession in typical British sincerity maintaining that he never prayed in his life, that he never saw any need of it and felt the prayer was just a suspicion and was just a coward when danger beckoned. And Joe was not to be convinced. He left the chaplain feeling that he was right. The next day both of the soldiers found themselves in the front lines of battle. Bullets whistled over their heads like angry bees. Both knew that it was just a matter of time when one or the other must fall in battle. Joe not only was nervous but cursed John who was of peaceful disposition John gave his friend this advice “Keep quiet, Joe, I’m praying. Perhaps it would be better if you also prayed. The bullets came more frequently and closer. The roar of arms were deafening. Bullets rained down with greater frequency. Joe was in a panic. He wanted to outshout the din. In desperation he shouted at John. John responded”. Idiot, shouting won’t help. Bow your head and pray. Only prayer will help us now. Joe prayed: “Dear God, I beg you, help me” In the same moment a bullet hit his helmet and Joe fell to the ground. He fainted. When he became conscious and knelt on both knees and prayed as a soldier: “Thank you, dear God, I thank you!” After successfully winning the battle, John and Joe again visited the chaplain. Joe asked to be baptized and John was his sponsor. Joe had recognized the value of prayer. Both left the Tunisian Campaign unscathed. They are in Great Britain for a long merited rest.

 In a certain home in one of our towns, a volunteer was leaving the home of his family. As a memory and for luck, his mother gave her son a three inch cross. She had brought it home from Europe. It was an heirloom passed down for generations. His mother asked him to always wear it. The son promised he would. His buddies sometimes made fun of his wearing the cross around his neck. Some were just joking around ; others were mocking in some degree of seriousness. In spite of the criticism, Paul kept his word to his mother. He had not taken it off his neck. The military service sent him out to some island in the Pacific. When in the thick of battle, he took the cross and wore it outside of his military uniform. It was noticed that he said a prayer occasionally to the Crucified. One day, when in a foxhole at Guadacanal shrapnel flew in the air. Hi buddies cried out to the chaplain, “That’s it for our Paul. After the noise of battle, the medics came to pick up the wounded and the dead. To the amazement of his buddies, Paul didn’t have a scratch on him. He was bit shaken up but not bad. He looked to see if he had his cross. He search and could not find it. Then he saw it a few yards from the place were Paul had fallen. The chain was not broken but there was a hole in the figure of the Crucified. The bullet destined for Paul had hit the Crucified and saved his life.

 “The ways of God are unfathomable”. So said the young chaplain who did service in the South. Eric was from a fishing town in Holland. He was himself a fisherman. The Nazis regularly confiscated the catch. He got progressively angrier at their actions.. One night, despite stormy seas, he maneuvered his boat in the direction of Great Britain and got across the sea without incident. He enlisted into the military service in Holland. Before he left the family home, an elderly woman whom he knew tied a rosary around his neck reminding him to keep it on and it will save him from every danger. The young man swore he would even though he was not a Catholic even though the rosary did not have much significance to him except that he remembered the old woman who gave it to him. Ultimately his service took him to the Dutch East Indies. Since he was a paratrooper, he jumped from a plane. Unluckily he landed in the jungle where there were hiding the rest of a regiment. In their vengeance they were going to get even with him. When he landed, they all surrounded him and when he unloaded his parachute they ripped off his shirt. They saw the rosary and fell into shouts. They jumped away and fell on their knees. The paratrooper stood stunned. He did not understand that the sight of the rosary created this unusual scene. They sent him to their leader. The leader came close to the soldier, took hold of the rosary and kissed it. Then later he told them to let the prisoner go. They all started to pray in full voice. The leader knew the Dutch language and learned of the prisoner’s origin. They gave him gifts and brought him out of the jungle. The leader was baptized and promised to recite the rosary daily for the rest of his life.

 Here’s another anecdote about a Captain and a Private. It was a Sunday on the African war front. The Catholic Captain was attending a field Mass. He noticed a private who was a Jew. He found it to be a curious thing. Even more so since they had to trek several miles through the desert in 130 degree heat. The curious Captain waited for the private and invited him to his jeep to give him a ride. He said to him non-chalantly, may I ask why you to attend Mass? You are of Jewish persuasion, are you not? “Yes sir, Captain, I am! But tomorrow they are sending us out to the front. When we are at the front, I may meet up with a bullet and I have the name that I have. I figure that if I will have to the Father Creator, He will not worry about what kind of devotion I took part?” The Captain replied, “You got that right!” But I am curious as why you chose to attend Mass and march across three miles in this hellish heat to a Catholic Mass when you could have gone to your own service with the rabbi. The private was quiet. It seemed that he thought the Captain would not understand but after while spoke in a solemn voice: “This is why: In the army I attended devotional services of various kind but the Catholic Service seems very special to me and gives me a boost. I couldn’t explain it, Captain sir, but the devotion harbors a special strength in terms of the battle and I feel that I am in protective hands.:” Then he added, “ Does that sound screwy, Captain? - Absolutely not, the Captain replied, I completely understand. The strength is God – in the Eucharistic Sacrament.” The private said in a very solemn and respectful voice: “Sir Captain, I do not understand about the Catholic service, the Mass, but whatever it is, I believe in it. I am sure of it.” The private probably was not conscious that with his reverence and respect, he made an admission of Faith. The next day, a bullet destined for the private, hit him. The Catholic Captain found himself kneeling at the private’s side. The private looked into the face of the Chaplain. He recognized him and said with a smiling face, “Do you remember yesterday, Captain? Well, guess I’m going to the Big Boss?” – The Captain moved closer to the private and gave him a drink of water from a canteen. The soldier spit blood. He grabbed the Captain by the hand and said, “Captain, Sir, let me tell you my secret. I always wanted to be Catholic, but it seems to me that I didn’t have the nerve to show my intent because of the criticism I would face. I am sorry now that I did that but it would make it easier for me to leave this world.” The Captain smiled through his tears and said sincerely, “Nothing easier! We will attend to that, here, in this place. Putting a couple of crops of water on the private’s bloody brow, he said, “Samuel, I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen.” The baptismal ceremony ended on the field of battle. And so did the private’s life. His soul fled to meet his Creator, “the Big Boss, up there!”

 About a year ago, one of the religious men managed to escape the German Reich. He tells this story. It happened in one of the Catholic hospitals in Monachium. It was in an institution under the aegis of the Franciscan Order. In a private room, a wife of a German officer lay in expectation of the delivery of her first child. Above her bed hung a crucifix. In his visit, his first visit, came an arrogant and conceited apostle of the new world “ordnung”. His look ended up at the crucifix hanging on the wall. He asked the nurse to remove the cross immediately. The nun did not follow the order. The officer repeated the order. The nun repeated, “No!” Then the officer took out a revolver, pointed it at her chest and threatened to shoot her if she did not obey. The nurse burst into tears, but slowly she took down the cross, kissing the wounds of Christ praying under her breath. The officer smiled sarcastically, saying cynically, “That’s better.” I do not wish for myself nor for my child to ever look upon the face of your crucified Christ.” On the next day, the child was born blind. For the rest of its life, it will not see the countenance of the crucified Christ.

 In the newspaper, “The Army and Navy “Register” from October 13th, 1943, under the title “Bomber With Prayer On Nose”, -I read the following: “The Coughin” Coffin” a battle scarred B-26 Marauder with a prayer scrawled on its nose, has arrived at Rolling Field, after taking its U.S. Army Air Forces crew safely through Tunisian, Sicilian and Italian campaigns. The six men of the crew, who have been sent back to the United States to use battle experience for training purposes, say, they are convinced firmly that a pencil scrawled prayer helped bring them through unscathed with none of the plane’s occupants receiving a scratch. - “We had all kinds of trouble getting the plane ready to take overseas, Maj. William Pritchard, the pilot, related. “One morning, just before we were ready to leave, I noticed written on the nose of the plane, “God bless the crew of this plane. I’ll say a prayer for your safe return.” - That made us all feel pretty good. We found out that one of the mechanics working on the plane had written this. It gave us a warm feeling to know that this prayer was riding with us on the nose, during our bombing attacks. It is still on the nose. It brought the plane through 50 bombing missions, from January 1st to October 9th, 1943: Eight German planes were shot down and a cruiser, an 18,000 ton transport and a 10,000 ton merchant vessel were sunk by the officers and men in the plane,” he said.

Prior to the past Christmas a miracle happened, even amidst the neo-pagan and barbaric Germans. A German leader, a philosopher and theologian and minister of the occupied territories in the West, in 1938 wrote, “The Catholic Church as well as the Lutheran Church in its current existence, has to disappear from national life”. Well, but five years later he maintained that “religion became renewed” under the banner – “with a return to the Church” - he advised the storm troopers and gestapo to take part in the holy devotions. – Another daily, the “Hamburger Fremdenblatt” on the very feast of the birth of Christ call for the German people to “put your life in the hands of God; and advised all the readers of the need to return to the Church. And so we see the dissolution of those whose goal was the destruction of churches, to destroy religion and get rid of Christ the people’s souls.

 And so I come to a close in this conversation. History corroborates that people can’t help themselves because God is absolutely necessary. In order to know God, religion is necessary because it lays out God’s law and the human obligations to Him. Logically, churches are necessary to disseminate the teachings of Christ. And when we have some idea what those laws are, we need to bow our head and bend our knees, and pray humbly and sincerely. And so – let us all pray, always and everywhere that God help us to persevere in our Faith and attain the goal, through our Creator’s help to domestic happiness and eternal salvation.