**Our Virtues and Faults (Conclusion)**

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

The old and popular proverb holds that every coin has two sides! The truth of this saying is proved in all people, as well as in all societies! Our emigrants are no exception. In general, it is sound. However, it has its faults and social ills. The worst and most general is the lack of interest in American political affairs! I honestly admit that our countrymen patiently pay taxes, even while frequently cursing them for being so high! I admit that, thank God, they seldom have run-ins with the guardians of public order! I admit also that they conscientiously keep God’s law and with Polish regularity and tenacity they break the 18th amendment, but is this enough? They sit peacefully, fold their arms on their chests and say: “And what do I care? Is this my business? They’ll do fine without me!” About 19 years ago, I was present at a certain ceremony in one of our big cities. Before a stand located in the city center, different representations of diverse nationalities paraded; the master of ceremonies explained to the various assembled dignitaries the different divisions. “Here come the Irish. Now come the Italians. There come the Germans.” When the thousand-strong Polish representation came forward, he turned around and with a cynical smile added: “And here comes the dumb nation!” Oh, how that hurt, but unfortunately he was right! Imagine: There are between three and four million of us here in America. Is this not a power? However, does anybody anywhere in politics take us into account? We are ignored and kicked around every step of the way! What is the influence of Poles in Chicago, Buffalo, Cleveland, Detroit and Pittsburgh? Scanty, almost nothing. At most they give us what drips from their moustaches; here and there they throw a tiny bone, what I call leftovers, and instead of having various high-ranking officials, we have to be proud of our street cleaners – sweeps and our dog-sitters!

Is it not time, is it not high time to wake up in this matter? To show other nationalities that we know our strength, and that respect is due to us! Let every citizen, man and woman, make use of the right to vote. Let them go to voting booths; let them learn how to vote, and to always remember, that close sits my shirt, but closer my skin. We complain about various officials and various laws. We whine that the former are people with no heart nor conscience, and that the laws are senseless and go against God’s laws as well as natural law! And whose fault is this? Ours! Because thousands of us said: “What does my vote matter?” We stayed home. We didn’t vote. The offices went to people who cared more for their own interests than for the good of citizens. Crying and despairing will not help us. The ballot and the vote, these are arms mightier than guns and cannons.

If American citizens of Polish descent are indolent and sluggish in their approach to local matters, how are they interested in the affairs of far-away Poland? Especially during the last twelve years, we cared little about Poland and her affairs. I agree that we should not interfere in the matters of the Polish government. The Polish governmental snuff-box is not for our nose, nor vice versa! Polish politics and the political parties of Poland should not be directed by us here in the United States. The appropriate stage for this is within the borders of the Polish Republic. However, we should regard as our sacred duty to defend both privately and publicly Polish matters, to interest ourselves in the general good of Poland; we shouldn’t allow the Polish country and nation to be insulted, humiliated and mocked! Meanwhile, what do we do? We fight over personalities and old-country parties, not only privately, but also in public; not only in the columns of Polish newspapers, but also in English-language newspapers! This is bad! We should stick by each other. Let us learn from the Germans and the Czechs! We are divided among supporters of Piłsudski, Paderewski and Dmowski! Like the Apostle wrote in the Letter to the Corinthians: “Each of you says: I belong to Paul, and I to Apollos, and I to Cephas, and I to Christ. Is Christ then divided?”[[1]](#footnote-1) And I humbly ask you: “A follower of Piłsudski – or Paderewski – or Dmowski – are they not all Poles? Is Poland divided? Let us rise once and for all above sectarian Polishness, and let us keep to national Polishness – we will all benefit, both here and there! Let Poland send us enlightened, learned and truth-telling people, and not one-sided party members, who sow hatred and misunderstanding between us, and among us!

Through these two national faults, there shows yet another – the beast of envy! Every Pole wants to be a leader and commander, and nobody wants to listen, to serve and fulfill the commands of others! There are two main Polish principles: “What I lack, you shall not have either” and “Where there are two Poles, there is one Pole too many!” It is a strange thing, that no class of Poles is free from envy; from child to old man, from the worker to a professional; he who is better educated is even more envious. Neither the monastic habit nor priest’s cassock is an exception. You think that I exaggerate? Read our Polish dailies; go to various associations’ meetings, to the gatherings and rallies of organizations – listen to the speakers at various ceremonies, you will realize whether I am right or not! We forget the words of St. Cyprian: “Envy is the source of defeat, the school of evil deeds, and the material of faults. Through it the bond of the Lord’s peace is broken, unity is torn apart, and truth is violated!” I will add to this: the hand of jealousy digs for us one common, dark and deep national grave, at the bottom of which of our own free will we commit to eternal rest all possibilities of reaching higher posts, both in society and in the Church! – This is other side of the coin.

All of our hope, all of our future is in the generation of growing children and maturing young people! In them is a hidden force and invisible might- which provokes pride in some – admiration in others – anger and hatred in others. They are well aware of the fact that in the near future, the present young generation is like an ocean wave, which nobody and nothing will stop from taking high posts and eminent positions in American society. Our young people are naturally gifted with life’s fortitude, more than young people of all other nationalities, with no exception! Our young people are God-fearing, hard-working and sober! They love God – love their parents – and respect their brethren! True, there are exceptions, but they only confirm this general rule, and precisely because of their being uniquely sad cases do they make their impression on us. We do not need to be ashamed of our young generation. In every branch of science at various universities, both lower and higher, they occupy if not superior, than at least high posts. Various people accuse our young people of being scatterbrained and shallow! They are wrong. Our young people are cheerful, they have vibrant and bright imaginations, but below the shallow superficiality, which is only a shell, there is the good, warm, noble and loving Polish heart! Just as the poet wrote: “Times change, and we with them.” We cannot and should not judge the present generation according to the principles and opinions which our ancestors held! I ask all the prophets who complain so much and shed crocodile tears over our young people: and what do you do for our youth? Or what have you already done? Deliver harangues, give recipes, this is something anybody can do. We need deeds – to work for and with our young people. This criticism, which in its majority is unfounded and one-sided, will not lead far, will not gain the hearts of our youth.

Today, if here and over there, our youth is not on the appropriate level, then first of all the blame falls on the house, on the school, on theatres, on newspapers and on the silly prohibition! Does the family and the home have the same meaning today as years ago? What is this change? How many times have I heard mothers chasing their daughters from home, saying: “You could go take a walk on Broadway, maybe you’d find yourself a man!” How many of our mothers, day after day, dolled up according to the newest fashion, right after dinner, rush from home to some party! The morose father, every evening after supper, seriously walks up to the attic, or down to the basement, or to the woodhouse because that is where he keeps his dearest treasure, a pot for brewing “moonshine whiskey” – or home-brew! Is it any wonder that some young people hide out on street corners or in pool rooms?

Today’s schools do not bring up young people, but at best educate them! A great number of teachers promote strange principles and, according to newspapers from a few weeks ago, American youth are plied and fed with Communist principles! No wonder that a certain part of young people look cynically on morality, life and the destiny of humans? Theatres and different kinds of magazines, with the motto of education and progress, describe in the most gruesome detail the most brutal murders, assassinations and all scandals! Small wonder then that sometimes young people dart forward from the well-disciplined ranks of their comrades and die by the roadside?

On the sad effect of the ‘noble experiment’, which in reality after a 12-year trial period can be called the “Mother of Crimes”, I let down a curtain of silence! So, faced with such relations and such circumstances, we shouldn’t be surprised that there are certain cases within our own young people! We should all beat our breasts and plead guilty. Our young people deserve help and support, and not our condemnation! Once again I repeat: Let us be good examples to our young people, let us love them, let us help and advise them, let us work together with them, let us not build a wall of negligence and coldness between us; our young people will pay us back, heart for heart, love for love, they will be a living and permanent monument – to frighten our enemies – to their own good and to the honor of our forefather’s homeland. To the young people who are listening to me, I cry out in the words of Archbishop Cieplak: “Do not cut off contact with Poland! Get to know the Polish language, Polish literature well. Not superficially, but comprehensively. Go to Poland. Get to know the Polish spirit. Get to know Polish history and the extremely rich past of Poland!” I will add, cast off our faults, but do not renounce the virtues which our forefathers were famous for, and God permitting, you will be the worthy descendants of your ancestors, the great sons of great fathers!!

1. The quote is based on 1 Corinthians, 3: 1-23. It is not a direct quote, however. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)