**December 12, 1943**

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

If there is anyone in the United States of America who is enduring hurtful and heavy emotional moments it is the mothers, wives, and engaged women of our pilots, marines and soldiers. And no one is surprised at this. For example, take the mother who has sent one or more sons to the service of our country. Especially those sons who led an exemplary life and were good sons – who could imagine the fear of losing children? Wherever she looks around in the home everything reminds her of her son in uniform; here he sat at the table, here he read the newspaper, here, he sat listening to the radio. There is his bed, the bureau with his clothes. She sees, in her mind’s eye, her son hurrying to work in the morning. And again in the evening coming home with a smile on his face. Often, she browses through pictures of him. This one shows his First Holy Communion. Another, he is standing in his uniform. How quickly the years have passed. Where is he now? What is he doing? Maybe he lays somewhere in the forest, covered with grime, with his enemies close to him in the midst of bombardment. Maybe her son, who is a marine, is on distant waters, amid enemy submarines cruising nearby. Perhaps her pilot son is amid the clouds with the possibility of his plane being shot down…is he wounded or perhaps dead? News comes from the battle field. A new offensive is under way. Every mother trembles with fear. Every mother is thrust into uncertainty. There are lists of the wounded, the lost. She listens to the reports on the radio. There isn’t a day or an hour when a mother’s face is not covered with tears. And the same can be said about the wives and engaged women of soldiers, marines and pilots. Today, one can safely say that there is not family where there is not nervousness, a fear, or a complaint with tears. Our men know this well. And they feel badly. I would not want them to be hurt at my comments. They know well that the current ware is not a game or sport. They know what they are exposed to. However, they believe strongly that God is with them and that with God’s help they will return to their mothers, wives and betrothed. We have work to do; may we end victorious. Now to my talk entitled:

DO NOT CRY FOR YOUR SONS

Mothers, wives, and engaged women, let your sons speak to you personally. My words would hit a wall; my urging fruitless. Here is a letter from a marine who fought against the Japanese. Currently he lies in a field hospital waiting to return home.

“Dear Father:

I am fortunate in misfortune, for after several months traipsing through the jungles in search of yellow rats, I now have a comfortable bed and good food. Our men are in serious battle and are not afraid of the enemy. They put up with discomfort patiently. I often think of home and family, especially of my mother. They are good soldiers because they are protecting what is most dear to us. Everywhere and always they speak of their mothers and praise them. Some thirst for their mother’s coffee; others, praise the pies their mothers make, other about the bread they bake. My friend is an Italian. In time of battle we lay in a trench which was made by a Japanese Zero! Bullets whizzed by us like flies. Both of us prayed, I in polish and my friend in Italian. Briefly he interrupted his Hail Mary and said to be: “Gee bud, what wouldn’t I give for a heaping big dish of my mother’s steaming macaroni! In the heat of battle none of us thinks about the danger. We know that in each battle someone will be wounded and someone killed. We are prepared. We are happy to be protesting our country and our freedom in life. Each of us, however, worries about our parents and the little ones of the family. Generally when we read the letters that our mothers are distressed and are crying, cannot sleep or eat or are ailing. One of my fellow soldiers received a letter from home, in which his sister wrote that their mother got sick from worry, got a stroke and died. He himself got into a temporary nervous breakdown and had to go to the hospital. He so took it to heart because he thought that he was the source of his mother’s suffering, the mother whom he so loved in his youth. When he came out of the hospital, he was not the soldier that went in. Please Father, on Sunday; remind the audience and especially our mothers, not to worry so much about us. We are soldiers. On the battle field, we cannot have the same comforts that we had at home. Some days there is a lack of everything. When we are taken from the front lines and go back; then, we don’t feel like eating or drinking anything – the first thing that each or us grabs is a photo of our mother, wife, or girlfriend which we kiss. Then we clean up, eat, and read our letters. After that, sleep, sleep, sleep. The doctor said that they may send me home. I do not want to. I would rather stay with my friends and fight the Japanese. Again I would ask that you do not speak, father, and tell the mothers not to cry. “Tell them to keep a stiff upper lip, and smile. May God bless our Mothers, Wives and Sweethearts?”

How this letter cries out for peace of heart for those whom the fighting men left behind. They, in the protection of their country, do not think of discomfort or danger. They do not want their families, especially their mothers to complain and lose their health in worrying about us. Bishop Bandurski said: “These young knights were not covered by the night of doubt or despair. Do go to war in the name of Christ and Freedom. The entered the service, sometimes of their own will, but caught in their own emotion, left their impoverished houses, and halls of labor, their schools and went to foreign shores, not counting the days of hunger and doubt in order to fight…deliberately and not dissuaded. Soldiers go to the fields of sacrifice and their journey is written in cemeteries, crosses and wounds. And they do not complain. They ask of us prayer, work and survival on the home front without worry and discouragement.

Here now is another letter: “Father Justin: Five years have elapsed since I left home and my dear parents in Poland and came here. In a few weeks we will be celebrating Christmas. I remember that Holy Day of our Lord’s birth. I remember that celebration in Poland. Our whole family in communal gathering, with my father sharing the wafer with us all and wishing everything good to all. Those were great moments. Today it is totally different. Not all could rejoice at this feast, like they did in years past. I belong to that generation. I was left alone. My father died in the first days of the war. My mother and family perished in the bombing. I received that information through the Red Cross. When I learned this, even though I was married, I enlisted into the service. It did not come easy. My wife is one of the best women on this earth. She understood that I ought to go to war and sit at home. When the holidays arrive, I remember the last “wigilia” and my thoughts go to my wife and our home. But I have my own accounting to work on those who erased the life of my family. My American friends from Polish homes feel the same way that I do. We do not complain. We love our country and our own too much. We understand that our obligation is to protect our homes and our families and that will not occur without sacrifice and blood in life. But we do not worry about it. We have one current bother: in my company there are five Poles with which I go to Mass. We don’t know where to get wafers which we could share among each other. I, Father, in the name of us, the Poles, ask you to send us at least one oplatek, for which we will be ever grateful. There are only few of us Poles here but we stick together. We cheer each other and help each other out. We share everything like brothers at home. We read our letters from home together. And those letters are of a great help. Especially when they say that we are in their prayers and are confident in our efforts and happy that we are in the service. However we worry when we obtain bad news from home. In that case, I always tell them, what Poles underwent in Poland and what they suffer today. They not only listen, but want to hear more. And because of this they are better soldiers. It gives me joy to encounter such well brought up men, in the Catholic spirit, young American-Poles. Three of them come from Pennsylvania and two from Detroit, Mich. Once again, Father Justin, please sent the oplatek for which I sincerely say, God love you.”

In reading such letters, from solders, one must bow his head and thank God for our boys, who are just and full of faith and of serious undertaking and not thinking only of themselves but remember those they left behind. These are our knights of freedom. They go forward, endure and serve! The suffer wounds; endure sacrifices, live through want and need, in order that we might breathe the air of uncompromising freedom.

You have listened to a letter in which a son writes about his mother. You have heard another in which a soldier reminisces about his wife. Now a solder writes about his sweetheart: “Dear Father: Before I entered the army about two years ago, I have not neglected to listen to you Sunday talks. Every Sunday I went to the parents of my girlfriend and together we listened to the Rosary Hour. And it was you who were instrumental in my decision to enter the service. I listened to what the Germans did with the Polish people, and I thought to myself that I must sign up. Because if we didn’t protect what we have, what is ours, we would be like our invaders. I have already been on two fronts and thank God nothing happened to me. My girlfriend writes to me regularly. I reply when time permits. Only in the last couple letters she complains that she misses me and lacks peace. Letters of this nature, we soldiers do not like. When we know that everything is in order at home, then the thoughts of that give us hope. Here, we have not time to think about danger. They give us orders and we obey because that is the nature of being in the service. We also feel that we are far away from own but let everyone in America thank God that we fight an enemy beyond the borders of our country and not in our own country. If it were so, then it would be worse for everyone. I know they hear that. Let them pray for the end of the war and for our safe return home.

Mothers, wives and sweethearts, speak like Polish women, “Today we brought our soldier to the understanding and recognition that there are greater things, national things: our freedoms. Our boys are there: in the air, on the waters, and on land…enduring and serving well. As a model of our mothers, wives, and betrothed, I add portions of a letter written by a woman, a Polish refugee: “I have to add a bit of hope and relief in the current moment. Our life isn’t that bad and hurtful as it seems. One just needs a little patience and strives a little and the goal will be reached and I can say I did my part giving my son and now after all, I stand higher and I am better than I thought. I am just a weak entity, but nothing shall do me harm. In 1938 I lost my husband and later in 1939 came the Great War. We were thrown out of our homes into a dark and silent night. And the eviction of hell at which we thought we were buried alive where people were dying like flies. I was a survivor with a strong will and I believed that God is good and merciful and he will hear the smallest bug. And I wanted to live. I shouted: I have to live. I prayed at night to the stars as I took giant steps in the cold nights, below zero, to get water. And my eyes filled with belief looked into the sky and whispered the word of prayer, “Lord have mercy on me. Listen. Do not abandon me. Or when I hunted for food secretly at night. And the quiet prayer to those bright stars, in the freezing situation under a dark night sky, I was answered. Why? Because I had a strong faith that God would not abandon a poor widow swept up in exile. I read this worn out saying: “The Polish woman is proud, the Polish woman does not cry, the Polish woman is manly: the Polish woman has a strong will and hope.” And this character trait was admired by our enemy even though they hated us. And so my mothers, wives and betrothed remind yourselves from this one of your Polish sisters.

What can I talk about on the Christmas Vigil, on the Feast of Christmas and New Year’s Day, sons and parents? You husbands, dear wives, you fathers of children left at home? You, faithful friends of your betrothed. They will speak of family life, of the true peace and fortune among their own. Warm words and tears will flow. From hand to hand photographs will go of family, of individuals like some sort of treasures. These gatherings go well into the night. And the boys at war will be happy to muse about those far away who await them that they have loved relatives, dear wives and children and sweethearts. These thoughts not only give them warm feelings but also spur them on to knightly deeds and victories.

However, not all soldiers will be celebrating Christmas this year with such feelings. How will those locked up in concentration camps feel during the Holy Days? Or those in labor camps? Or those imprisoned? Or those exiled and thrown out of their homeland? Or the prisoners of war? Or mothers separated from their children? Or children ripped from their mothers’ arms? Compare these troubles and fears with theirs and know how fortunate you are and how many reasons to be thankful to God. Alexander Janta, describes this scene of Christmas Vigil, spent somewhere in France in 1940: “The church doors open as if in a film; it is filled with people and light, a church at night. The special view of this devotion is the night and the surroundings which provide the scene in the deep walls of darkness. The hallowed night speaks to the heart and to the imagination. People kneel. Here is an entire group of officers and polish soldiers amidst crowded Brits filling the knave and the choir. The altar glistens decorated with gold. Whispers of prayers fill the air. All rise for the gospel. Only one officer kneels enrapt in his own thoughts unaware of the mass. He kneels with his brow supported. He is unwilling to stand. No one sees his face; just his bowed head. But what is hidden in the recesses of that heart, no one knows. Certainly he cries. He cannot help himself from his emotion from his tears which he cannot withhold. The light of family love was shut for him, the sun of the best of emotions the fortune of his own home. How many millions this year in the world on the Christmas vigil and the Christmas Mass, far beyond these shores, stand before their ruined and destroyed homes? These were their family homes. Some think of enclosed fences and barbed wires. Perhaps yet their loved ones are alive there. Mothers, Wives, Sweethearts, compare your doubt and suffering with theirs. Maybe those thoughts will lead you to appreciate what you still have.

My obligation is to cheer you up, to life up your spirits. True, at the Easter Vigil there will be an empty chair and maybe more. But you have the rest of the family with you. You will not have to spend the holidays in the midst of fiery bombings and the machines of war. With the breaking of the wafer you will see the beaming faces of the little ones. In peace they will sing “Silent Night, Holy Night”. You loved ones are standing guard. With their thoughts, their souls. They wish not to see and cloud of sadness on your faces. They should be as on other vigils of the past. This year’s Christmas Season will be filled with joy, satisfaction, serious and heart felt as is other holiday season. Humanity, in spite of the 14 years of suffering with hope in the soul and a heartfelt tear in the eye will turn to the Baby Jesus who extends his hands and says, “Come to me all you who labor and are pained with doubt, and I will refresh you.” Mothers, wives, and sweethearts of our pilots, marines and soldiers, wipe away your tears. Dismiss the fear from you minds. Be those manly women of whom we read in Scripture. Be such heroes, like your sisters in Poland, who went through so much, and were not broken, but were stalwart and on whom rely the manhood of national life.

Listen to the Song of the Polish Woman:

“O God, in the Holy Hour,

Heal our bloody wounds

And bring back country and family

And bring back home and fatherland

Help us to remove injustice

And turn the evil war

So we again would praise,

Hope, protected and in peace.

In order that we

Without fear or toil

Could gather near the Christmas tree,

In the familiar peaceful way

At the vigil hour

And look upon the tree’s light

Asking again for graces.

Quietly breaking, share the wafer

Silently for those who died

And singing with quivering lip

Let there be peace on Earth.