**December 13, 1931**

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

A week ago I spoke about our fathers and mothers. I gave them the homage and respect that is their just due. Their achievements are great, especially when compared to what they encountered upon arrival. They came here as orphans, in the full meaning of the word. Far away, across the ocean, more than one man left not only his father and mother, but also his wife and children, more than one woman left her husband and children, who came later on earned or borrowed money. They knew neither the local customs nor the language. Everyone was hostile towards them and looked at them suspiciously. Often at work they were regarded as mere doormats. Or, in extreme cases, they served as slaves. The worst, hardest and least paid work was what they received as their share. And yet their deep faith, their unshaken trust, their unlimited patience and iron resolve helped them to complete success on each front.

And only today certain unasked and uncalled for protectors of ours and our affairs ask surprised: “Are these the same people who came here years ago in search of their daily bread, in search of freedom of speech and religion? Are these the same people who, despised and manhandled, were ashamed, even afraid to admit to being Poles?” Let me answer them in the name of my fellow countrymen, scattered all over these extensive and friendly United States of America: “Yes, my friends, you, who made a fortune thanks to the work of these industrious Poles, nay, even thanks to their blood and their sweat and yet hated them – it is only now that you open you eyes and admire the Poles! And yet it is the same people, virtuous, industrious, God-fearing, peaceful and compassionate! The only difference is that years ago, these Poles were not aware of their own powers or abilities. Poles were convinced that they were born to a life of misery, a life of whippings and beatings – and so they were treated with as little compassion as the mules in Pennsylvanian mines. And the Poles were convinced that there was no other way. It is different today. After so many years in America, Poles look back and see that not only they are equal to, but even above other nationalities in what regards the fulfilling of civic duties and virtues; that Poles were, are and will be the best material for model American citizens. And so the life of misery, of manhandling, of a certain type of slavery became history. The time came when American citizens of Polish descent received the public recognition that already their grandfathers had merited, the public recognition which is also the due of the present generation. Really we are a little bit too docile, too slow and too well-behaved in some matters. Yes, too meek and too timid in fighting for the rights and compensations which we are justly entitled to. It seems to be a Polish custom, brought to us by our fathers from the Prussian, Russian and Austrian bondage. It is time, it is high time that we forgo and abandon these unvirtuous virtues! So as to encourage you, to cheer you on and to comfort you, I will be speaking to you about:

**The Pole as an American Citizen**

Right at the beginning I would like to make note that I am not tried to incite controversy among listeners. We are Americans both legally and politically. But at the same time we are Americans or American citizens of Polish descent. I am trying to prove – and I will prove – that Polishness and Polish descent never have been an obstacle for us to completely and perfectly fulfill our civic duties towards our adopted Homeland, contrariwise to the claims of some people who, I know not by what right, have turned themselves into the guardian angels of the freedom, loyalty and welfare of America. They deny our patriotism and our devotion to the star-spangled banner; they go so far as to compare us to the Chinese, etc. First let us fall back on statistics and square our accounts. The Polish foundation is ancient, but not obsolete. It is alive and vital. We ourselves are the most convincing proof! There are more or less 4 million of us in America. It is a group, a true army in which there is both robustness and strength! Only listen: there are more of us here in America then inhabitants of Bosnia and Herzegovina; more than Croats in Croatia; more than Dalmats in Dalmatia; more than Estonians in Estonia; more than Latvians in Latvia; more than Lithuanians in Lithuania; more than Serbs in Serbia; more than Slovaks in Czechoslovakia! This great army of Poles, if only awakened from its present stupor, has the potential to become a giant that everyone would have to take into account, both on the social scale and on the scene of domestic policy. Further deliberation on this fact I leave for later. I return to the statement that this army, in spite of its lethargy, carelessness and lack of interest in certain matters, in spite of certain visible deficiencies… has two principal assets, which surpass all vices. And these assets, or national virtues, are a devotion to the star-spangled banner and loyalty to the American government. A few years ago, Congressman Johnson publicly voiced his opinion of the Buffalo settlement: “Remove these 200,000 Buffalonian Poles, along with their bank savings, with their real property, with their publishers, and most of all with their incredible ability to work and save, with their power of purchase and what would remain of Buffalo itself? Poles are part of the city of Buffalo, although their settlement is remarkably Polish, just like Warsaw itself. But this does not mean that Buffalo Poles are not Americans! On the contrary, their settlement is remarkably American in every respect, the only difference being that the language universally used is Polish, not English.” And I would like to draw a parallel. What would happen if someone removed the 4 million American citizens of Polish descent from the United States?

Surely you remember the late Archbishop Jan Cieplak, a martyr who died on February 17th, 1925 in Passaic, NJ. In his last appeal to Poles in America, he wrote as follows: “A characteristic of the American people is their hard work. This beautiful trait is especially prominent in Poles. President Coolidge openly and honestly brought this up himself when I visited him in Washington, saying that Poles are industrious, thrifty and loyal. The Poles in America by their constant work, their model dedication and thriftiness (otherwise unknown) have accomplished much in the religious, social and economic fields.” I ask you, is it not through this that Poles have proved themselves to be model American citizens? In 1898, on Tuesday, October 25 here in Buffalo, in the St. Stanislaus School Hall, the then candidate for N.Y. State governor and later famous US president Theodore Roosevelt gave a speech. One of the things he said was: “I am convinced that I can speak freely to you, because I know that Poles always esteemed courage and sincerity, and from the times of Pułaski Poles were always the great patriots of this country”. Poles in America, more than other nationalities, by their blood-wrenching yet diligent work contributed most to the development of natural resources. Who even today extracts coal from Pennsylvania mines? Poles! Who digs out ore and iron copper from underground regions? Poles! Who pours out sweat in steel and sheet-iron plants? Poles! Who loads and unloads ships’ hulls? Poles! Who slaves away, stoking furnaces with coke? Poles! Who stands by the hammer and the anvil in factories? Poles! Who fixes train tracks? Poles! Who does the most difficult work in silk factories, in slaughterhouses, in stocking, shirt and box factories? Young Poles! Who sweats in sewing rooms, dry-cleaners’ and bakeries? Young Poles! Who dries dishes in hotel kitchens, in restaurants and in clubs? Polish women! Who cleans offices, halls and rooms? Polish women! Who scrubs floors and washes the linen of rich people? Polish women! Everywhere you look, at each honest and arduous task you will find Polish men and Polish women. This too proves the civic virtues of fellow countrymen. And so always, from the time when the first Poles came to America, up until the present day, they showed gratitude towards this second and adopted Homeland, and fulfilled their civic duties loyally and conscientiously.

Here in America we have certain people, self-proclaimed 100-percent Americans, who claim the right to be called model American citizens. Therefore I too publicly proclaim that Americans of Polish descent are 200 % above those self-proclaimed 100 % Americans. And I can prove this – in the last World War, where were those who today declare themselves models of American citizenship? They hid behind the skirts of their mothers and wives; they avoided compulsory military service, even by resorting to perjury. They excused themselves not only because of their wives and mothers, but also sisters, cousins and grandmothers. Meantime, what were the young Americans of Polish descent doing? They went to the first and nearest recruiting centers and of their own will enlisted in the American army. These young men left everything behind them: their father and mother, brothers, sisters, frequently young wives and children. These Americans of Polish descent were under no delusion that war was a dance or a party, but still they went eagerly and willingly! They went to fight. And they fought courageously. Every official list of lost, injured or killed in action was filled with American last names ending in –ski! And Washington statistics show that the percentage of our Macieks, Anteks, Kubas, Jędreks, Stachs and Pietreks in the general number of American soldiers killed in the World War reached 12 percent, while Poles constituted only 3 percent of the whole American nation! So Polish youth sealed with their own blood the public proof that Poles are not 100, but 300 percent American! And when the time came to buy the bonds of various liberty loans? In this too Poles fulfilled the duties of American citizens. Here in Buffalo, the Corpus Christi parishioners bought more than $150 000 bonds in the third loan! We must keep in mind too how the English newspapers praised the Polish miners in a certain part of Pennsylvania for buying American bonds worth 11 million dollars. In Chicago, one of the banks sold Poles American bonds of a certain issue for $ 1 500 000. Apart from that, Poles bought government-issued savings stamps; they gave generous amounts to the American Red Cross; they donated to various Relief Committees, to each needy charity. No other nationality can match American citizens of Polish descent in fulfilling their duties towards America, this adopted Homeland which Poles grew to love with typically Polish openness! And they will continue to love it, because the Pole cannot forget that here he found not only physical but also spiritual bread; here he found the freedom to worship God in the language of his fathers and forefathers; yes, he will love this American country, because here, after years of efforts and toil, is where his tired and worn-out bones will find repose until the day when the Archangel Michael calls him before the throne of the Highest so as to account to his Creator for fulfilling the duties of his Christian and civic life!

And once again I return to Archbishop Cieplak who said: “You ask me, what impressions do I bring with me? I am heartened, surprised and enthusiastic about everything that I saw here. Once I asked a Polish boy in a Wisconsin parochial school: “Where is Poland?” Without a moment’s hesitation he replied: “In America”. Naïve yet typical. Children instinctively know how to touch upon the truth. The Polish community in America has been very active in building – many churches, schools, institutions, organizations – are these not momentous achievements? And all of this within a comparatively short period. I will tell everyone when I go back to Poland how the Poles in America work, how they make fortunes through work and thriftiness.” Once again I ask – is all this not a true monument to the civic virtues of Americans of Polish descent? The 4-million strong Polish presence in the United States always knew and honestly and devotedly fulfilled their duties towards the welcoming and beloved land of Washington, in the meanwhile never, not even for a moment, forgetting the distant, dear and loving Polish land. The love of the distant Homeland was like a burning bush which was God’s way of showing the Israelites where to go in the darkness of the night! The love of Poland didn’t prevent Poles here from fulfilling their civic duties, quite the opposite, it gave them strength and fortitude each step of the way. The knowledge of Polish history, the usage of the Polish language, and keeping the beautiful Polish customs and traditions did not block true progress and intelligent education, did not prevent the present generation from reaching the highest positions on the scene of American life. Contrariwise, all of this was a help and encouragement in the battle which they were forced to fight with declared enemies and secret adversaries! And they were victorious!

Dear fellow countrymen, definite victories await us also. All we need is unity, a unity between everybody in everything. Only disaccord, misunderstandings, and fighting each other may and potentially will break apart this 4-million strong army, which is unaware of its own potential, of its own strength and might. After all, we should all be as brothers and sisters of one large family. We should rejoice and be glad together; we should lament and cry together; we should help one another; we should comfort one another; we should encourage one another. By doing so we will not only by fulfilling God’s commandments, but also we will be showing people of other nationalities that the American citizen of Polish descent is a model of civic virtues, worthy of not only praise but also imitation! The priests together with the people, the people together with the priests; hand in hand, shoulder to shoulder towards the worldly success which awaits us! Future generations will remember us with gratitude, and God will reward us both in this world and in the next!