**December 17, 1939**

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

One time it happened in the old Roman state, that a lioness, an animal that was given special care by the Romans, abandoned her two sons, Romulus and Remus, who were then raised by a wolf. The Romans declared by edict that public sacrifices should be offered to appease the gods. When Romulus and Remus became adults, they decided to found a city where the wolf had found them. The brothers quarreled over where the site should be and Remus was killed by his brother. This left Romulus the sole founder of the new city and he gave his name to it– Rome. The date given for the founding of Rome is 753 BC. I assure you, my dear listeners, that if similar sacrifices were dictated by our pastors because of the misdeeds of fathers and mothers who without mercy sacrifice their children it would not be accepted. And who could understand that these happenings are occurring often and no one is sad, no one cries, no one lifts their voices and cries out to prevent murder or calls out against it. As far as I am concerned, I cannot be silent, for to be silent is to be also guilty of not caring. I wish today to speak to you about this matter and expose this great transgression when parents become child-killers of their own children. Today I will deal with two transgressions which hold within themselves other transgressions. The first transgression is to refrain to teach their children to do good and the other is to teach them evil for in both instances they help their children to death. (First to the death by sin, and then the death of eternal life. There was a time that these kinds of parents were looked upon as murderers.

These days by chance a brochure came into my hands, a brochure of a man of the world, who among others sought a reason by God, who could destroy the earth in one moment as with the Angels in heaven, however did not but wanted from the first moment of creation, created a mother and father giving the man and the woman the beginnings of making another generation of people and the capacity to fill the world with people in the future. The reason which the man of the world could not fathom or find was already found in the fifth century by St. Jerome who said that God did so for two reasons – partly for good children and partly for the good of the parents. The great good from God for the parents that the Providence of God elected the parents as the instruments of nature and in the realm of grace when the parents cooperated for the salvation of the children through good rearing.

And that was the reason for further establishing the sacrament of marriage, since if the couple were only under the law of nature, Christians could assume that God does not expect from them only the enlarging of the family. However since He saw fit to bless husband and wife with a sacrament it is evident that God wanted to use the husband and wife, in order that the children born of them were given graces and later eternal salvation which follows grace. But it is God’s design, even though misused by many Christian parents, because they are satisfied only to give children a temporal life, as their total commitment, and not care at all to give them a good Catholic spiritual life.

Two types of understanding and knowledge parents are obliged to give their children. First is what they should know as Christians and second is what their children should do as Christians. What pertains to the first: the Holy Spirit often directs children to listen to the teachings of their Father and Mother and keep to those teachings. “Listen, my son, to the discipline of your father, and do not neglect your mother’s teaching” says the Scripture.” So it is not only important to learn surfacely what is taught... just a couple of prayers and then think of nothing else. The Creed is important and what it implies. What good is offering a loaf of bread before your children unless they could partake of it? Looking at it is not sufficient. In the beginning for 3,000 years there were no books until Moses wrote the first. Now for 30 centuries, books, according to St. John Chrysostom, contained the works of the Fathers of the church who assigned the things necessary to know and are necessary to our salvation. How would the generations believe correctly if, like some parents only told them to memorize a few things which the children did not understand in the first place. More is necessary in teaching the faith. It is necessary to explain to them the mysteries of the Faith and specifically that which they ought to believe such as the Trinity and the Incarnation without which knowledge it is necessary to be saved. What is worse, there are many such fathers that leave the teaching to the mother as perhaps in the animal world they care less after they have begotten children.

You may say to me that you teach your children all that you yourselves know about the religion and that you cannot teach your children what you yourselves do not know. It is this that worries me the most, that in this world there such a great deal of ignorance. What does this people know today about Christ; what does it know about God? It knows His Name in order to say it not paying attention to what they are saying, using it to swear at every moment. The mysteries of Our Faith are hardly known or so ineffectively known that error is evident. And when we look at round objects at a distance, they appear flat, so people look at good or bad from a distance and things are of little consequence. And then in this surface knowledge what can one do? Then one does not live as a Christian but lives less than people. That worries me the most. But let not these complaints take me off the track. But you say that you cannot teach all these things to your children because you know them not yourselves. I reply to your statement in yet a different way. You are obliged to send your children to teachers and sermons and you yourselves are obliged to teach yourself the truths which you do not know. The mother who does not have milk to feed its children, cannot in conscience permit her child to die hungry, saying that “nature did not give her sufficient milk.” That’s why there are moms to shore up the lack of milk and are obligated to give the milk of knowledge and teaching which are so necessary for the Christian life. Why then don’t you send them to a Catholic School and why don’t you bring them to Church to be taught? Do you want to be outdone in mercy by them permitting by reason of carelessness the death of your children? The Roman writer, Pliny, writes of a panther who, seeing that her young fell into a ditch and were dying of hunger was so saddened that she went out of the woods to a road and asked the first passerby for help so she forced him to go after her and he pulled them out of the ditch more dead than alive. Some Parents should be sent to this school to learn the quality of mercy on their children so they wouldn’t die spiritually but learn the faith. In the first ages of Christianity, do you know what they did after baptizing them? They were enrolled among the Catechumens for months and sometimes years as long as it took so that the child learned of the mysteries of the faith and could believe. After a short period of time, since many were dying without baptism, the parents would understand that after baptism there was more to be done. And godparents were initiated in case the parents died. And so at least get your children to be educated in the faith with others who are knowledgeable in the faith. Some way should be open to prevent their eternal salvation.

Don’t get me wrong. I am not saying that if you only send your child to a catechism class that you are sinning mortally, no, but I am saying that if you are negligent in a serious matter that you are sinning mortally. This is the opinion of the Fathers of the Church who add that the Bishop may punish the Pas- tor who does not teach matters of eternal salvation, that parents could be reprimanded if they neglect to educate their children in the faith. If you only knew how many evil people the devil earns, through ignorance of your children, and how he makes a huge catch the souls of your children, in the murky water where you cannot see the results.

Therefore such irresponsible parents earn the praise of the devil when they cooperate with the devil in condemning the souls of children through ignorance of the faith. And then do you think that when parents easily talk away their responsibility in this important matter that they will wipe away the tears of the Church which hurts internally when it sees their children easily persuaded by heresies which poison their minds. This carelessness in educating the faith with easy excuses will not be forgiven easily from the traps of the erroneous view of life. As long as you are leaders and parents of your children you have the obligation to bring them up in the faith.

Another thing you ought to teach them, in order to cooperate with the plans of God, which entail the responsibility as parents besides teaching them the faith is to teach by personal example how to act responsibly. That is why in Holy Scripture Tobias is praised so highly because he taught his son to “Fear the Lord from childhood and to avoid serious sin.” You need to instill into the hearts of your children from birth the ways of Christian life by good example, the respect for the great God, hope in Jesus Christ, devotion to Mary, great respect for the Saints, for the Sacraments, the Church and for the Sacrifice of the Mass. What is also necessary is the conviction that there is nobility in action and suffering without complaint. The realization that all good that we do does not only come from ourselves but is helped with the grace of God, without which we cannot hold ourselves free from even the smallest temptations that assail us. One must know that sin is the greatest evil and so must be avoided until death. This and other similar information should regulate the life of every Catholic and these principles should be instilled into the souls of little children, that they will be remembered for life. And don’t tell me that it is relegated only to priests and preachers. You err badly. All priests and preachers are not able to do as much good for the souls of your children as could a father, if at the beginning of the day he is aware of his responsibility to teach. It is appropriate to call parents “Visible gods” since children do not understand in the beginning that there would be someone higher than those who gave it birth and so that great authority that parents have is more discernible. Continual daily parenting may be compared to the idea that the flower in the meadow is far more served by daily dew than a heavy rain once a month. Further besides the good daily word is more effective if the children see by good example the daily behavior of their parents like clocks which follow us in time. In the end parents have the tongue to teach and the hand to punish.

It is in this however that Parents stray, because as they do not know how to teach their children something good, similarly they do not know how to protect them against something bad. And it is in this kind of love toward their children, which is actually dislike, they permit them many things, without any regard to the harm that is done to the children as well as to them. Do you really love your son whom you brought into this world?” asks the man. Instruct him to see the consequences otherwise the day will come when he will force you to cry. (Spare the rod, spoil the child).

In times gone by, as St. Jerome advises, “Barely has the child been born, at the advice of physicians sprinkle them with salt so as to toughen their body. In our time, parents cover them with sugar. It is no wonder that when they grow up, they become the source of domestic sourness. Listen to the beautiful words of the Holy Spirit. “Punish your son from his youth, since when he grows up, he will try to be your master, and not believe in your words, thinking that he knows more than you do, and he will repay you with bile for the bread you used to feed him. May God protect you from these winds which arise early for they don’t easily subside. If children learn early in the morning of their lives not to listen, and talk back, and get whatever they want, I forsee a large storm in the home, which not so easily will stop. Let no one dare to say l that children are of a bad nature, and punishment does nothing. Just try to punish them and see that punishment is of some avail. If your son were by nature bad, punishment will correct nature’s thrust. Even honey is not by its very nature white, and nevertheless with constant beating will turn white.

But a deal of parents instead of using their hands, what do they do? They use only the tongue, cursing at every little thing, not understanding that the cursing only makes things worse. What kind of fruit can you expect from cursing? Rearing children is bad when you need to drive one devil out with another. This tolerance which you use so badly with small children, so you know where it could be used effectively? You could use it with your grown up children. It is why the Lord reminds us through the words of St. Paul: do not nag your children when they grow up and avoid making them angry when they are grown up. Better that disappointment is joined with goodness, rather than venom and anger. Suppose I asked you today, what kind of water cleans soiled matter better: salt water from the ocean or sweet water from a stream? More than one of you will answer me that it is ocean water, but you wouldn’t guess, for it is just the opposite; and the reason for it: in order to take out stains, it is necessary for the water to soak in the entire fabric, but ocean water since it is salt water, does not penetrate the fabric; the sweet water will and so salt water, will wash it less from the stain. It is no different from removing moral stain from your children when they are already grown up and able to be talked to. When reminding older sons or daughters of offense, sweet words instead of angry words are more effective in reaching their hearts and removing the problem in the relationship. But to the contrary when the words are short and angry and not understanding they will not be as effective in reaching the hearts of the children and removing the offense.

Here it is worth mentioning the removal of two contradictory things as can be seen in relationship with people who are drunk. Those who are well under the influence never get angry since they don’t have full control over their intellect in order to recognize the harm done. On the other hand those who are not heavily drunk go beyond their anger because they have some use of their mind and can recognize harm done. It is similar our parent and children relationship. Some parents are so drunk with love of their children that the do not use their own reason and let children do what they want and are never critical. Others who are somewhat drunk with love, know the evil intent of the children to which they expose themselves to and know the remedy to be used consider it with mixed emotion and respond with cursing and one can say about them that they throw out the devil from the home but invite another one in.

OBLIGATIONS OF PARENTS TOWARD THEIR CHILDREN

[*Note: This talk was given by Aloysius Sobus, secretary of the Province of St. Anthony. The title was implicit on the obligations of parents toward their children.]*

Up until now I explained my feelings against those parents, who not only do not teach their children about the good, but in addition do not teach them what is bad. What shall we say about those parents who come to that degree deliberately teaching their children bad things and make no effort to teach the good? In the first place, those parents belong to the group that gives their children a bad example. Every example has as much influence in itself from words as it is easier to believe in what one sees, rather than what one hears. They say that words are the picture of the deed, then example is the “the deed itself.” If every bad example without regard to from whom it comes is pernicious, then so much more pernicious must be if it comes from parents? Parents are for a small child, an ideal to be imitated. That is why you cannot even identify the force that is good or bad life of their parents, so that they make their children according to their example. I f we scrutinized the consciences of the boy or girls, we would find that internally there is a complete outlook of the Father and Mother who brought up the child.

Be careful to note the way you live, having your eyes focused not only on your own salvation but on the salvation of those to whom you have given birth. When you are condemned, you not only condemn yourself. You will fall as well as one of the princes according to scripture. There is no war in which the leaders would fall, but soldiers who fought the war as well. It is laughable when unpraying parents tell their children that they will chastise them if they don’t say their prayers. Kneel for a short while praying and see if your children don’t take you up on the example. It is necessary to teach your children how to pray, but you need to teach them like you teach children to walk, by taking them in your hands and walk with them like a mother would teach step by step. Those educated in the way of birds have noticed that the lark sings even more beautifully when teaching its young to sing. And in reality larks which are brought up in cages do not sing as beautifully as those raised in the woods, since in the cage there is no teacher to teach. You all ought to be devotional, always living Christian lives. But even more so when you become families and give good example to your children to do good and avoid evil. The lives of parents should be like the chisel of a master sculptor who can create a beautiful work or end up with a heap of ruins. Parents, it is easier to ruin a sculpture than to succeed in producing a beautiful work.

Parents are often the first teachers of their child. Whoever taught their child to swear the name of Jesus did not have any value in it to begin with? Is it the mother who in every difficulty anger has it on her tongue? Who taught the child to blaspheme God if not the father who does so when disciplining the child to instill fear in them in order that they listen to him? And who taught the child to invoke the devil several times a day? Is it in your family home where parents from morning to evening are guilty of this beautiful lesson?

Various forms of filthy language which you have on your lips, even do they don’t bother you, at list you ought to avoid that because of evil which it can cause your little children.

Zoologists tell us that deer don’t mind the attack from flies when they are feeding their young. What a stupid acquittal some married spouses make when they think they can be free to use the same kind of language with their children present as they do when they are alone. Parents – that which is food for adults, who know how to live on this earth, can be poison for children who still do not understand. St. Thomas says that in the battle for chastity the first thing which sounds the trumpet of caution is curiosity. And as a result of this curiosity children would want to know in everything – why? That curiosity later pushes them to experiment to test situations.

If parents ought to be careful with their words, judge now how much care they ought to devote to their actions. Some children become more perverse with age. What a great responsibility parents have when they say, “There is no danger; children are innocent.” How many children in their flowering years lose they innocence obtained in baptism. If the father is dissatisfied with his wife and brings another woman into the house, do you think that it would be difficult to imitate him? St. Augustine tells of a certain pagan who gave himself up to perverse action, to protect himself looked upon a pagan idol and said “I, a miserable human, should I not have the same freedom as the gods.” Similarly our children can say: if my father and my mother who are decrepit, are not satisfied with their past should seek, why should we who are in the flower of our youth seek. Go to those children and see what they think. Will you reprove them? Will you explain lent to them if you never fast?

What shall we say about parents who force children to sin? The issue is that the devil uses parents as their tempters of the innocent. If the daughter because of her natural shyness, or the experience of past failures would want to leave the company of the young man, the mother, who ought to sanction it, stands first in acceptance in order to get rid of the daughter from the home so she would become a mother. She does not wish the best for her daughter but just to get rid of her.

What shall we say of parents who sell the honor and respectability of their children for monetary gain? It is a terrible thing yet it is necessary to speak of it. I will only say that, according to the words of Jesus, a stone should be tied to the neck and drown in water and not only a stone but a mountain.

Parents, if you children will go to hell because of you, you will have no better devils than your children. So for the future you need to be very careful in the upbringing of your children. Offer them to the Lord from the first day and then be careful; they are God’s children as well as yours. Learn to live a Catholic life in order to save both yourself and them (children through obedience and yourself through good example and the reminders you give them. Be not only parents but companions and saviors of your own children.