December 23, 1934

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

In two days, the entire world will celebrate the one thousand, nine hundred and thirty fourth anniversary of the birth of the Christ Child. Humanity will rejoice and be glad. It is everyone's celebration and for everyone because the Christ Child recognizes all races and religions; it does not matter where you came from nor the state one is in because he came to teach, gladden, rescue and save. It is no wonder that on the Day of Christ's birth a general joy and a sense of newness fills the heart with hope and faith. History is the mistress of life. And so we read the pages of history: Caesar Augustus sent out a decree of census to the nations conquered by the Roman Soldiers. Large groups of people, obedient to the decree of the mighty Caesar from Rome, hurried to their birthplace to register according to the law. On the streets of the small town of Nazareth, groups of travelers wend their way looking for shelter for the night. All inns are occupied. Doors open and after a quick conversation slam the door again. Sever pilgrims, headed bowed leaves the town lacking hospitality and goes through the gates of the town and seek shelter in stables left by shepherds. Among them is found a father, St. Joseph and the Blessed Virgin, painful at the cold response of people. They enter tired from their journey into a stable which is going to become the birthplace of the Savior. At least they'll have some comfort from the madding crowd. Frost silvered the roofs of nearby houses. Starlight lit up the night and the moon bathed the stable with an unearthly light. The time the world had waited had finally arrived. Near the stable, shepherds tended their sheep. A crowd of them came nearby and with sleepy voices told of the doings of the past several days. They complained about their pain and unfortunate situation which they were thoroughly engrossed with that they did not hear the words of the angel which stood in their midst. " Be not afraid because a great day has dawned; I bring you a great joy this day on which a Savior was born who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David. As a sign, You will find a baby in swaddling clothes and placed in a stable. And there was a host of angels giving glory to God: Glory to God in the highest, and peace to people of good will. And it came to pass that when the angels left to heaven, shepherds said to one another: Let us go to Bethlehem and look at the word which the Lord has shown us. And they came, and found Mary and Joseph and a baby laying in a crib. The encountered the word of which they heard." This short review of St. Luke the Evangelist, opens the door to today's talk.

 **THE MANGER**

First of all, I will put before the eyes of your soul, a scenario of the situation of humanity, weakened and rotten. From this we learn: "darkness covered the earth and a shadowed humanity' wrote the Apostle. Just as we sing in our carol, "God is bring born, the night trembles. Nations, if they have not fallen, they shook on their foundations, not sure of tomorrow. Rome under the crafty coxcomb, Octavius Augustus, who put himself at the top of the material world. The roman world didn't have a boundary. The imperial armies swarmed over all of Europe, Asia and Africa. The Roman Eagle reigned. The temple of Janus was closed as a sign of peace and protection. Otherwise, however, it was as a moral and spiritual side. Material power and growth, imported damaging consequences in customs and morals. From the conquered nations came great wealth from taxes and from the soldiers' acquisitions. Prisoners were imported by the thousands. Rome allegedly became an international assemblage. The conquerors paid tribute in gold, silver, precious stones, and farm products. The old patricians and careerists who came into fortunes, swam and bathed in luxuries and pleasures. Caesar declared himself god. In his tribute, not only triumphal monuments but marble temples. Songs were written in his name, incense was offered and sacrifices held. The crowds went wild. They just needed bread a blood thirsty games. Upon seeing the brut al combat and bloody stocks, the wounding and dying, the spectators yelled from satisfaction and pleasure. Everything was sacrificed to materialism. Usefulness and even excesses where the sole goal of aristocrat, officials, soldiers, workers and prisoners. The idea of family disappeared completely. The feminine condition was degraded by immoral life and divorce. There was possibly on difference between these traffickers of luck, health, and the life of the Roman populace and that was the prisoners. One group ruined their health with over consumption; the other shouted out threats to the competitors for lack of mercy and humiliation. Distaste for an honest life captured the mind of people, and despair and retaliation ruled over the hearts. Up to that time Romans had religion and a priesthood, but there was no moral stance to maintain this situation. Poets sang, writers wrote, philosophers and wise men claimed that the Roman gods had died. They tried to import gods and goddesses from beyond their borders, and moral teachings that at least tried to stem the tide of moral decay. In the Pantheon, they up statues of gods from Egypt, Syria, Asia, Babylon and Chaldea. Instead of remedying the situation things got worse. Religion was a mixed bag and atheism grew. Epicurus, the philosopher suggested: Eat, drink, and be merry for death has no joy." That aphorism pleased the Romans. Here and there, the voices of Plato and Aristotle were heard to no avail. The crowd went wild. Doubt about everyone and everything grasped the heart of all, At that specific time, a star shone over a stable in Bethlehem, a poor abode, amidst a Jewish people unknown. The world stood still - nations began to think and powers shook. Angels sang a new song: "Peace on Earth to men of good will" - an answer to a promise that people had impatiently waited for a thousand years. A world history was directed to a stable at Bethlehem and will continue until the end. All will admit this: the plain man and the educated; the believer and non believer. A writer wrote: "The birth of Christ is the most important event in all of history. No battle, no transfer of government, no phenomenon of nature have such meaning that could be compared with the short life of the Galilean." In time of darkness, a God-Child came into the world. Creator and Judge dressed himself in the figure of a small, innocent and defenseless baby. He chose as his home the stable of mindless animals, a quiet stable, poor and cold. He did not choose the palaces of the great, and permitted himself to be lain in the hay, in a s table. The angels first brought the joyful news to shepherds, simple men, who left what they were doing and rushed to the stable to see the amazing sight. With the birth of Christ is a remote place a rebirth of the human race was announced to humanity: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will.

The words of the Angels contain in themselves two thoughts: The duty to praise God and the fundamental of peoples redemption of people which is nothing else but peace. The carrying out of this order will bring happiness; disregarding it will only bring unhappiness. If until this time there was little happiness among individuals as well as among nations, then the reason lied not where but the disregard of the command in the wrong roads and false sources which man had previously experienced. Today, more that in the past, the world experiences the doubts and efforts built on only human calculations; today in shame we look upon the works of solely human hands, which brought humanity to material and moral ruin; today it is beginning to understand that having the world to put in order and its good, and its survival, he so divided the duty that he millions of humanity in a tough situation. Because this world, "mamonizm", knew only on little god, money and material goals; it bowed its head to larger financial power; however, it put God, ethics and justice, if not locked away, at least was set aside, and the commandments set aside. One of the great political thinkers said that Christ is the key, the rock of the world culture, so that anything of lasting work in the culture comes from Christian thinking; protection of the weak and sick, children and the elderly, is the basis on which equality of people and nations is maintained. Before the birth of the Go Child humanity existed in a purely natural order; in nature the battle rages and the more powerful rules. Christ announced the eternal low of man, freedom and the untouchability of person and nation and based on justice, peaceful existence between people and nations. One needs to seek, in the manger, for the dam that stops the world from utter destruction. Life will not walk normal paths unless Christ stands at the center of culture, unless the program of Bethlehem's night is not fleshified in the life of the individual and nations, unless that constitution given by Christ, is not incorporated in the life of the world. Christmas is a Holy Day filled with joy and happiness, illuminated not only the by charm of the divine Child, but by religious values: love, truth and faith, actually importing this blissful state of peace and happiness, for which the soul of man yearned and still yearns. The which a person experiences on Christmas Eve, those same emotions of joy, brotherhood, goodness and sweetness become the participation of our whole life because the Christ Child, Prince of peace brought peace to all and for all time, only under the condition that man in his life and activity will follow the star which leads to Bethlehem, and conducts his life in such a manner that in him the glory of God and good will combine in ne unending hymn of Bethlehem's night.

Let us stand by the crèche of the God-Child, What has He to offer us? He explains the mystery of salvation, voices to us the worth of the human soul. Father, look upon the countenance of the adoptive father; mother, look into the face of the Blessed Mother; children, look with concentration at the Christ-Child. Remember that peace is only for those of good will. For all of you who bend under your burdens and the crosses of a hard life and a losing hope, I say to you:

"Like a dragon tired, huffing and puffing it stood at the station with drowsy eyes. Some obese people stormed through the doors. A bunch of Jews came out, a Pastor of Jężew, some school children jumped out who were heading for vacation and some others. They all went into the train station because the snow and the wind sent all under a roof. The only man who wasn't in a hurry was about 30 years old. He exited the train looking upon the snow and the wind and the people in a hurry. He wasn't wearing warm clothes; he wore a gray overcoat, reminiscent of a soldier's uniform, and a gray worn out cap on his head and ragged shoes. Thank God, I have arrived he said to himself and seemingly closed his hands in prayer.

He had, after all, something to be thankful for. He was returning from Russia, where he spent two whole years. He was taken there after court cases, sent to prison, told to work, and for entire days was not given food. He withstood all of that. There were more horrible things - he was sentenced to death but pardoned, he was stood before a death squad, and was told to be a witness while atrocities were performed on women and children. And when he survived all, when he went through the hell of dirt, decadence, hatred, crime, and bloodletting, he came to his family's land. The family thought him dead. He could not give them information on himself when he was away because he was always under guard and so he had no information on his family either. What joy it would be to be reunited. Will he find his father, mother, wife and baby? Maybe they died, maybe they forgot about him? He felt sad, hesitated and stood thoughtful.

The wind blew and the snow swirled around. God's will, he thought. He has to look upon the homestead, he thought, as he gained strengthened and battled the elements. He knew the way well, he had walked it as a child and drove to the railroad station before. He knew each stone and tree along the route. A half mile, and there on the left turn, the little town with the parish church and close to the church. He recalled the history of the place. Following the highway, he entered the forest. Here it was a bit secluded from the elements. The snow swirled above the pines through which the wind made sound. He continued on. Michael entered the fields. A strong wind-blown snow prevented him from continuing. Only the electrical poles along the road showed the way. And so he proceeded, this wayward traveler, battling with the wind and the snow and yearning to be with his own on Christmas Eve. He almost lost the left turn but finally found it. He walked into some kind of bushes and a ditch. He was not dressed warmly and was fearful of the cold. He went on without a path or sign of humanity. The town should be nearby and I should come across it soon. Blessed Mother, help. Then Michael began to cry and pray so that he wouldn't die before he reached the entrance to his house.

Night had fallen, dark and foreboding. The snow storm was still in its intensity. Michael stood in the middle of the bushes and started to call out. The voice nipped his throat, as if the snow would not let him talk. He was hungry and tired and the wind still blew the snow but seemingly to a lesser degree. Beyond the clouds the stars appeared. Hope started coming back to Michael.

Then he heard the bells of the church. The larger bell sounded. Here, close to him was the path to the church. He makes out some fast moving sleighs near the church. A group was gathering near the church. A light blinked in the windows of the wooden church and the sound of hymns reached Michael's ears: "God is being born, the night trembles." Michael turned and hurried toward the church. In the church was a crowd to be seen. The pastor had begun the Christmas service and a carol burst through the air before the homily. Michael swelled his tears. He couldn't see because of the crowd but he noticed a child's head turning this way and that and by his side the bowed head of old Marian. And he joined in with: "Lift up your hand God-Child and Bless our Fatherland."

At the end of the service, Michael stood by the church doors, waiting for his father, while a lady grasped his had with a cry. He was speechless. The well known voice of his wife had brought him out of his reverie. In a short while, Marian came out with his nephew, joyously going back into church to thank God and his mother Mary for the love.

My dear listeners, I wish that your minds and hearts may be filled with hope and faith, when we hear at midnight the angels' song: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will."

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