**December 24, 1933**

Dear fellow countrymen and country women. I greet you with the words: Praised be Jesus Christ!

Every country in the world has exclusively national holidays and celebrations. A victorious battle, an extraordinary occurrence, the birthday of a great statesman, head of state, general, writer, poet, or musician are all occasions for public demonstrations of joy and happiness; the same can be said about provinces, states, cities, and even villages! Countries have their heroes; they sing of their heroic deeds; history relates their deeds of sacrifice and efforts, their friends make temples, statues and triumphal arches in their honor. Pilgrims visit the place of their birth in groups; they eagerly listen to accounts of the most trivial detail of their life. In some all of this stirs up admiration, in others a desire to imitate them in their own life, in others it lifts them up in spirit, it gives them courage in the difficulties and struggles of everyday life! In some it even reforms them into new and noble people, lifting them from the dust and dirt of debasement, showing them a better and nobler side of life.

Among all of these historical events, there is one, which does not belong to one country or one nation. It is international; it does not know borders, it pertains all of humanity. Every year, it is anticipated with joyful impatience by the world and humanity. Not only the believers but also the unbelievers feel the blissful influence of this memorable anniversary. This is the anniversary of the coming to earth of the Divine Child. It is Christmas! Tomorrow, as the world is long and wide, the praises of the Child Jesus will sound out: the moving and beautiful story will be told as of old but always new of the coming to earth of the Divine Teacher, who being God, took on a human nature, and instead of coming in glory and majesty, appeared to the world in the form of a tiny, weak, and helpless child, in the up until now little known and impoverished village of Bethlehem. A few people will tomorrow turn their thoughts to the distant Bethlehem, in spirit they will stand before the impoverished stable to admire the greatness and power and at the same time the weakness and humility in this tiny person, whose life and death after the end of all time will speak to the hearts and minds of people about temporal and eternal happiness, about the beginning and end of all, about the meaning and importance of the human soul. So also will we today think of the birth of the Savior and Redeemer of the human race. Every one of us, without exception, can benefit from meditating about Christmas.

**Bethlehem Stable**

At the outset I will ask of my listeners for one thing. Sit down comfortably, close your eyes and come with me in thought. Let us go back about two thousand years to a distant land. We are in the chosen nation but it is wandering. The land is Jewish but conquered and won over by the Romans. The defeated strain under the yolk imposed on them by the victors. Tears, complaints, unhappiness, and turmoil. The Jews not only fight with foreigners, but they also fight viciously amongst themselves. They are divided into classes; some carry a passionate hatred towards others; there was little love and mercy, and there was a lot of severe and iron justice, which often ended in inhuman cruelty. What happened in the Jewish country happened all over the world. "A darkness covered the land." The earth was a paradise for a handful of privileged and a hell for the masses. Thousands overindulged, and the masses die of hunger from lack of bread. Bloody revolts disrupted the peace and social order. The human mind wandered over the wilderness, seeking the answers to the problems and mysteries of human life! Life became like a book with no text and no point. Vanity sat in the minds and hearts. It is not surprising the unwanted children, are mercilessly tossed on the public roads, and tossed to the dogs for feeding; or mercilessly murdered! It is not surprising that the dignity of virgins is lowered to the level of unreasoning animals; that the elderly are denied the right to exist; that slaves are tossed to the packs of wild animals, that they are thrown to the fish for feeding, that they are tied in bellows to lakes and tossed into the sea, that they are beaten and killed, and those exhausted by wounds collapse! Thus the human race quickly ambles down a depressing and sorrowing procession to its own grave, to one general grave. It is true that that world could be compared to a great graveyard, overflowing with corpses, rot and disgusting, smelling worms! Suddenly, a miracle happens. In a small, unknown village the Child of God comes to earth!

  The dark and freezing December night. The people of Bethlehem after settling the formalities of the Caesarean census are sleeping. Over there in the stable, in the quiet of the night, "And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us."(New American Bible. John 1:14) In a nearby stable, impoverished shepherds are watching over their flock: "The angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were struck with great fear. The angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Messiah and Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger."And suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God and saying: "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests." When the angels went away from them to heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go, then, to Bethlehem to see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us."So they went in haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the infant lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known the message that had been told them about this child." (New American Bible. Luke 2:9-17)

That was the Gospel description of the coming to earth of the Savior! The short and clear description, at which the eyes fill with tears and the human heart beats firmer and with more joy. After almost two thousand years, the anniversary of the birth of Christ stirs up feelings of joy, hope, and happiness. Let us remain for a minute by the stable. The manger is laden with hay. The newborn child lies on the hay. The Son of God hides behind the helpless and weak figure, the Savior and Redeemer of the World. The stable is abandoned and cold; it is a palace of the monarch and Lord of Heaven; the manger became a throne; the diapers are regal robes. Poverty, lack of goods, and misery. The poor Mother, the poor carpenter who is a foster father, surround the Child as do poor shepherds and even the poorest of the poor unthinking beings: the cow and the donkey! There is no surprise that though the Child came amongst his own people, his own people did not recognize him and did not accept him! The Son of God took on the figure of an impoverished Child, he chose for himself impoverished parents; he preferred to be born in a poor stable. He preferred to accept the first bows and first presents from poor shepherds! Do not be surprised that the earthly powers and the monarchs of time were overcome by fear. Truly, "God is born, power crumbles, the Lord of Heavens is denigrated. In scorn, he is covered in praise, the mortal king of all ages, and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us!"  Do not be surprised that the historian Chamberlain writes: "The birth of Christ is the most important date in history. No battle, no change of government, no phenomenon of nature has the same meaning that can be compared with the short life of the Galilean. History in the two thousand years after his life is proof as to how deeply and internally it is justified that we call that year the first year, and we start counting from that year. In a way, we could even say that history only starts from the birth of Christ."

For now, let us leave Bethlehem. I will lead you in the direction of our fathers. We are in Poland. It is Christmas Eve. The first evening star appears. The father of the family carries a sheaf of oat, a handful of hay, and a knot of hay in. He puts the oat sheaf in the corner of the hut; he puts part of the hay on the table, which the mother covers with a tablecloth, and part of it he puts underneath the table. Now, everyone is bathed and clean; they kneel by the table, and say grace, asking for work for the next year. First, the father takes the oplatek, breaks it with those present, sincerely wishing them health, success, and "the fortune of a heavenly crown after death." The mother follows suit, and then all the children follow the parents! They sit down to the table. The eating is slow and thoughtful because it is Christmas Eve, a ceremonious right of the people. Bowl after bowl is passed around because tradition demands that in this holy evening everyone eat in agreement from one common bowl. The Borsch with mushrooms, potatoes covered in oil, the cabbage with peas, the fingers with oil, beans, barley with dried apples, oat mill, noodles, cake with prepared plums, pierogi with cabbage and plum jam. At the end of the evening, the father intones with a serious voice, even though he is off-key, the Christmas carol, "In the Silence of the Night". After supper and prayer, everyone sits down on benches, take songbooks into heir hands, and sing our wonderful and endearing carols.

Many of you radio listeners remember such a Christmas Eve from years ago in the far away Poland! May that image move before your eyes some more. Afterwards, everyone goes to midnight mass. Sometimes one would have to go for hours, yet with what joy and desire did everyone go. The aged pastor, white as a dove, takes the Child into his hands and intones in a weak and emotional voice, "In the manger he Lays, who will pick him up?", and the people take up the verse and thunder back joyfully, so that it seems as though the whole Church is shaking. The priest and the count follow, the nobleman and the soldier, the official, the professional, the innkeeper, and the worker. They go with joy and happiness, forgetting about differences because it is Christmas. Arguments and strife die out, as do disagreements and misunderstandings, because the angels themselves once sang, "Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth to people of good will." The Divine Child is the example and epitome of love. Love brought him from heaven, love gave him a stable and built him a manger, love even nailed him to the cross. Let us move over to the battlefield during the times of the world war. Two opposing armies lie in the trenches. It is the 24th of December, Christmas eve. The frost is biting. The soldiers are far from the homeland, and houses, and families. They are reminded of the wigilia. The poor soldiers. That night, nineteen hundred years ago, the prince of light and peace came to earth in Bethlehem, and you on the anniversary of the birth are forced to spill brotherly blood. Suddenly, somewhere close by the echo of a humming voice lifts up: "In the Silence of the Night." From one trench to another, Polish voices are uniting. Figures pop out of the trenches and approach each other with song on their lips. The tears pour out of their eyes, tears of bitterness, but also of joy. The soldiers fall into each others shoulders. One takes out an opłatek from his satchel, they break it and which each other happiness, health, and a quick return to their free and independent country! At that moment the song "God is Being Born" is sung back at home.

Here is an excerpt from a description by Maria Maczyńska: "At the corner of the parish, two shadows are leaning to the hands of the old priest. 'We are from the Soviet Russia, we have come for an opłatek' 'Let us go dearest children, warm up a little, the frost is great, and you still have a long road ahead of you.' Were you scared at the border?' 'No, death does not frighten us' 'Maybe you would like to eat something? Maybe you would like to drink some tea?' 'We are in a hurry, we would like to return with the opłatki by the evening roll call.' However they drank the tea, warming their frozen lips in the hot fluid, and took a whole package of opłatki. Łodzia wrapped it in a linen cloth and hid it in her brassiere: 'It will be safer here.' They went into the church to pray. Taking in the sight of the saints from the altar with joyful eyes. 'Hey, what if we took this church with us, like with these opłatki.' The girl sighed, and an old priest leaned over to her: "The Church is in every heart in whose thoughts God lives, my child." "You have spoken the truth." He took them beyond the corner, clasped their young hands with a blessing over their bowed heads, and he stood a long, long time at the corner of the church, looking at the two figures walking away, which the darkness soon engulfed. The Polish guard let them through...they were carrying opłatki to their own people...that was enough, he understood. Silence...silence. Maybe they will make it. If only. Suddenly, a shot rang out. One, two, three. The eyes of the Polish guard watered up. 'Oh Jesus, did they hit you?' 'It's nothing, it's nothing, let us escape.' 'Will you manage' "If not, take these opłatki.' They fell into the forest, an unavoidable darkness surrounded them, they went, stumbled, fell down, and continued on. 'Look, we can almost see the light' 'It is our settlement' 'Just a little more' 'Does it hurt a lot Łodzia?' It seems as though it only grazed me, I feel weak, maybe I will make it' 'I am so happy, Andrzej.' 'You poor dear!' He took her into his arms and carried her, she curled up into his broad shoulders, she was so sleepy and tired! 'Jesus, Maria, what's with Łodzia?' 'Nothing, grandma,' the pale lips of the girl's face smiles. 'We were on the Polish side for, opłatki, opłatki! 'The boy's and the grandma's hands shook when they lay her on the bed; the bloody opłatki lean out from behind the brassiere, but the graze was only light and when the grandma put on the treatment, Łodzia woke up quickly from the fainting and smiled to Andrzej. 'Go, tell them that we brought them opłatki. How happy they will be, how happy!' Among the fences shadows move. The Zabiellow house is full of people: elderly, women, and children. There is a great, ceremonial, and holy silence. Their dark, overworked hands take pieces of opłatek and shiver. Their throats are gripped in emotion; for so many years, so many years! And for everyone its as though they have gone to Communion with a longing heart, as though they took God inside them along with the bloody opłatek!"

In the depths of the coal country, the hut of a poor Pennsylvania miner stands. They strongly hold on to Polish customs. The family is numerous. The children are grown up. One is missing in the family. For thirty-two years he has not been with his parents or siblings for Christmas Eve! The vocation and work do not allow him this pleasure and comfort. It is Christmas Even. The old father sits down at the table with the family. Next to him, there is an empty chair and an upside down plate! The father, brothers, and sisters put a piece of their opłatek on his plate. They have repeated this for years. The son, year after year, sits down alone on Christmas Eve and meditates. He reminds himself of his childish days, his deceased mother, those Christmases spent among his own; the parochial church, how many times did he serve at Holy Mass! And amidst this thinking, first tears come into his eyes, and against his will they fall down in abundance. Often this son, used to the battles of life, swept over by opposition and crosses, at this remembrance kneels down and prays even more feverishly as ever! In the day of Christmas, when he kneels before the stable and looks at the Holy Family, he sees his own father in St. Joseph and in the Mother of God he sees his own mother! Then his heart is filled with strange feelings, new desires, more ardent work over himself and over others. These are the results of his Christmas musings. A renewal of life, a desire for work!

Slowly, I move before your eyes the image of the crèche from two thousand years ago to today's times, to the times of the golden age. Christ came to earth as the Prince of Peace and the Teacher of Love; he came to everyone and for everyone. In spite of his superhuman love and mercy, from the manger to the cross, he was faced with hatred and persecution. Even after Golgotha to today's times, the teachings of his justice, mercy, and brotherly love, was and is sneered at, and refused with warnings and scorn. There has not been another person from the beginning who would have not only so many friends and imitators, but also as many enemies and opponents! This is no mystery, nor even a puzzle. The teachings and principles of the Divine Child are not the teachings or principles of the world. The former are filled with brightness, truth, justice, and love. The second are filled with darkness, falseness, lies, injustice, and hatred. The result of which is that a sad angel stretches his wings over humanity, under which the heads of turmoil, hatred, and unhappiness pop out. For this reason also the foundations of countries are moving and society is shaking. There is so much poverty, misery, and hunger. Maybe Christmas was in vain? No, a thousand times no! Today, after twenty centuries, the teachings and principles lift up in a powerful voice to the heavens and the echoes sound joyfully in the hearts and minds of millions, carrying with it and leaving behind it happiness, calm, and peace in the souls of people of good will!

One of our ancient and so dear legends tells us that at the night of Christmas a group of lumberjacks were returning to their houses. They were exhausted by a heavy work in the forest, frozen, and hungry, they return angry, testy, and in bad humor. The path goes by the Bethlehem stable. Through the gaps in the crèche, brightness comes through. Filled with curiosity, they slowly and quietly approach the crèche and start looking inside. In the miserable and cold stable they see the Mother of God modest and calm, quiet and humble Joseph, and the innocent and blissfully smiling Jesus lies in the manger! At this sight, their sadness and unhappiness falls off their stern faces, and is replaced by joy and peace. This image always stands before their eyes. It encourages them to fulfilling their duties, their work, and to the good life. The others are surprised that lumberjacks, up until now testy and unhappy, are so eager and joyful in enduring their everyday cross!

Dear Radio Listeners:

Let us all go to the stable. Everyone without exception. The bad and the good; the believers and the unbelievers; the cold and neglectful; fathers and mothers; husbands, wives, sons, and daughters. Let us look at this Holy Family. Saint Joseph, the foster father and husband! The Holy Lady, Mother and wife, and the Son of God! You, father and husband, look at the good and tranquil face of your guardian, St. Joseph! As the father and husband, do you seek to imitate his life? Are you hard-working? Are you sober? Are you caring? Are you agreeable? Are you exemplary? Are you a husband and father only in name; what about reality, in everyday life How many wives and mothers in today's times are crying to the Child of God that their husband is a drunk, a gambler, uncaring, the source of misunderstandings and disagreements. How many innocent children are praying at this moment for their father, whispering: "Dearest Jesus, give our father the grace of goodness and sobriety!" Fathers and husbands, look at those calm and good eyes of the Guardian of the Holy Family! Kneel down before the stable, promise him that from today, you will change your lifestyle, that you will be exemplary husbands for your wives, exemplary fathers for your children, and then you will hear the dear angelic song in your souls: "peace on earth to men and fathers of goodwill."

And now you, mother and wife, stand boldly before the stable! Look carefully at the face of the Holiest Mother! Do not be afraid; do not lower your eyes to the ground! She should be an example to you, is she? Look at how calm, patience, emanates from the face of the Holiest Caretaker? Are you a virtuous wife and dear mother? Do you care about the happiness of your husband and children or are you indifferent to it all? Are you argumentative, angry, and nagging? Do you care about others, neglecting your own blood and bones? Do you love the things of the world, and even hate the family and house? Instead of being the queen of the family, do you wish to rule outside the corners of your own house? Throw your eye at the figure of this Mother, who by the husband is faithful up until the hour of death, in silence and patience, in difficulties and pains for many years. Wives and mothers, maybe for you today, from the mouths of husbands and children come begging prayers and tearful requests! Kneel by the stable, ask with sorrow, so that you will always and with perseverance follow the traces of the Mother of God. Then, even you, in the pains and sufferings of everyday life will hear the praising song: "Peace on earth to wives and mothers of goodwill."

Finally children, dear children, today is your holiday. Stand before the Child in the manger. This is your patron and your example. The gospel writer St. Luke wrote about him: "The child grew in strength and in wisdom, and the grace of God was in him." Are you good, obedient, pious, and exemplary? Do you live in agreement with each other? Are you a comfort for your father and mother? Or maybe a sad and painful thorn that wounds their hearts and fills their life with sadness and pain. At your sight, do the faces of your parents fill with joy and happiness or do tears fill their eyes? Today, make one resolution, make one vow; that you will not willingly cause your parents the slightest sadness, that you will be a comfort and support for them; that you will repay their efforts and work for you with obedience and love. Then, not only will you hear the pleasant sound of angelic trumpets "Peace on earth o children of goodwill," but even the Child will lift his hands and trace over a cross, the sign and deposit of Divine Blessing, and so the happiness of temporal and eternal happiness!!

I will end today's talk with the prayer according to Władysław Bełza:

“Jesus, break with the Polish people, this white opłatek,

Grant that Your word may always live among us,

And bless our dear country, the villages with the cities."

This is what happened centuries ago in the divine stable;

The country had plenty to give you as it had full hands,

And today the country shrivels from poverty and grits its teeth,

It would give You something, Lord, but it cannot because it is empty-handed and naked.

What offering can we give You today, Child of God,

If we have nothing except a heart that loves you?

Take from our depths that which is worthy of You,

And with this heart be praised on earth and heaven!