December 25, 1949

I greet all of you my dear countrymen with the words: Praised be Jesus Christ!

 As an introduction to this holyday talk I call attention to St. Luke’s Gospel, in which He narrates the birth of the Christ Child in a masterful way. – “It happened one day that a decree was issued from Caesar Augustus to take a census of the world. Each one in his town had to register. Joseph of Galilee from the town of Nazareth to the town of David, Bethlehem since he was of the house of David, went with his engaged Mary. And it happened when they were there that Mary had arrived at the time of giving birth. She gave birth to her Son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a stable, for there was no room at the inn. There were shepherds in that place keeping watch over their flock. And an angel stood before them and bright light shone upon them. And they were seized with great fear. And the angel said, “Do not be afraid, for I bring you glad tidings which will be for all peoples since a Savior has been born to you who is Christ the Lord, in the town of David. And this will be a mark: you will find a Newborn Babe, wrapped in swaddling clothes, who is Christ the Lord. And with the angel there was a heavenly host, praising God and saying: “Glory to God in the highest Peace on Earth to people of good will. St. Mark in his Gospel adds: And when the angels left, the shepherds said to one another; “Let us go to Bethlehem to see this Word, which we have heard about.” They hurried and found Mary and Joseph with the baby in the stable. They witnessed what had been told to them. Everyone was awed at what they were told and what the shepherds had told them. The shepherds returned to their flocks narrating what had happened to them a Bethlehem And so in simple and short words we have the narrative of the greatest and most important happenings in God’s works in the history of the world and the history of mankind – the coming of the Son of God to the earth in the form of a defenseless, weak, vulnerable babe. Now to our talk:

 **BY THE MANGER**

 Christmas is surrounded by a halo of touching stories and legends that strike wondrous power in the minds and hearts of men, and from their eyes flow wistful tears accompanied with joy. The poor and simple stable became an attractive entity; how charming the hard and cold manger, with the presence of dumb animals. And even the hay and diapers have quite an impression on the believers; He came to all so once a year, some deliberately, some involuntarily, everyone is happy and rejoices in the annual remembrance of the birth of the Son The feast of the Birth of Christ is the anticipated awaiting by all. It is a joyful day for all. And for all without exception, the history of the birth, His works, His Wisdom, His Love and Mercy and his tragic death is the endless call to mankind to a honorable and virtuous life, to a sacrificing and dedicated life; and to a life giving the Creator and our neighbor that what is due them.

 The Christ Child came to this earth in a small country, Palestine and into an almost forgotten town, among the worn, suffering and occupied Jewish community. He was born of little known, poor and hard-working parents. An abandoned dilapidated stable was a palace for the Son of God. A Cold, wooden manger served as a cradle; a donkey served as a cradle. An ox and an ass were His guards and poor poorly clad shepherds gave the Christ Child homage. What was the state of the world which welcomed Him? A cold wooden stable was his home. History tells us that it was a broken, godless world He came into. Humanity was oppressed by the Vampire of ancient Rome, materialistic which controlled most of the then known world. The Rome of the Caesars was a power, but it also was a thief and not a well-wisher and spilled the blood of the downtrodden. It was fruitlessly that John the Baptist reminded: “Do works worthy of penance.” – These words fell on cold hearts and deaf ears. Eyes were trained on Rome where there was money, honor and political outlooks. Who then was God in comparison with Rome? As far as the nation is concerned, the poor people were overtaxed, under the excesses of government. The people wallowed in the torrents of tears and human blood. It was in these circumstances that the Christ Child entered the world which later was taught: “Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs in the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are the humble for they shall possess the land. Blessed who cry for they shall have joy. Blessed who seek justice, for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of justice, for theirs is the Kingdom of God….” It is no wonder that the first followers of Christ came from a line of ordinary people, fishermen and the like. And with time these people listeners to the above teaching, went in the footsteps of the Teacher, who won the souls of those who attained victory over the world for they did not speak of power or might but of goodness, mercy and love. They did not teach vengeance but brotherhood in God. That is why after two thousand years we celebrate the solemnity of the birth of the Son of God, who himself was persecuted and was ha ted because he taught: “Love your enemies and do good to those who hate you and pray for those who persecute you.” Such are people of good will who to this day are joyous in their minds, hearts and souls where non-worldly peace reigns. Along with the birth of the Christ Child, at the stable at Bethlehem, the angel sang of the glory of God and of peace to men of good will. The Son of God took on human flesh and became a man, not only to teach us by example how to live but, at the same time to open the gates of heaven, unifying the way of salvation and expand the multitude of those to be saved. The person who does not honor God wastes his life by not giving glory to God. The person who achieves great wealth, who was worth millions, and possessed whatever a human being wanted in material goods, honor and power but did not honor God that person will never be happy and sometimes in despair takes his own life in the end. Many do not pay attention to the fact that at the stable, the song of the angels in the first place sang “Glory to God in the highest and then peace to people of good will. In reality people ought to give glory to God, then they will have peace. Only with God can man have true peace and without God have eternal, poisoning discord. In order to have God in the heart and honor Him, one needs to have good will.. Not teaching, nor knowledge, nor cleverness, but good will. The desire is important. Good will is the necessary quality to attain peace, happiness, and satisfaction. Where good will is absent, there is no possibility of speaking of peace. In our times, why is there so much falsehood, missteps, deceit, malice, oppression, and violence. It is because in the hearts of men good will has died. Without it there came on the scene: suspicion, lack of hope, dissatisfaction, and conflict. The world has become one giant beehive, with the noise of many wasps,. People abandoned the Bethlehem stable, away from the Christ Child and so they abandoned peace. They demonstrated and contradictory will. When humanity, when nations return to the stable in which the Teacher and the Prince of peace dwells, there is also peace. And true peace of God will occupy the hearts of families, society, and the nations on earth.

 Historically, the silent night into which the Christ Child came into the world was a celebratory moment of the wedding of heaven and earth. Creator of creation, the power of God from man's weakness, the majesty of the King and the servitude of a servant. This day and age looks upon the manger with an unprejudiced eye at his humble environment and recognizes this quick event in an unknown Jewish settlement, and his miraculous appearance in the past two millennia with that always present power of the newly born Son of God, that person has to, with the shepherds, bend the knee before the Christ Child and find his faith, in the troubled of daily life which has dimmed the true vision of the reality that had taken place. There, in the stable at Bethlehem, there arose a spiritual Jerusalem, because in Bethlehem was born a new King – a king of love and peace, and brought with Himself an unheard, unknown peace and love. And so a joyous and thankful mankind begins to count the years that go by from the date of the birth of its teacher and savior. And all of this is because the Christ child is the highest and most holy and most salutary and miraculous event in the history of the world. Conquering and winning the world through the teaching of the Christ is a greater victory than the triumph of the most powerful potentate, monarch or the most powerful of the earth.. Between the Prince of Peace and the powers of this world there exists a deep cavern. Some kingdoms and their names have come and gone; coming kingdoms will come and go. They disappeared and will disappear like an ocean wave. The wave suddenly appeared and suddenly disappeared into the ocean. No one lives for them and no one will remember or care about them. The role of the Christ Child did not have and could not be embraced the borders of years as far as his life on earth. A Savior is born and He lives on in the souls of the believers and is resuscitated in the souls and strengthens them. And even though the Prince of Peace hid His True Identity, the Power and the Meaning of this fleshified Christ who is not lost in the fleshified world. Silence and power did not diminish it nor could it be erased. Quietly, with power, quietly, but with great power that came from Him was in its nature ever spreadable. It is an internal power, an undying faith that cannot be overpowered but spreads. The Prince of Peace wrote nothing and publically; His Mission was accomplished in a mere three years of active teaching and walking this earth as a healer. No one is fought-about like the Christ Child. The Church, leaning on His teachings sees no one as victorious as the Christ Child. Historians, civil as well as the ecclesiastical, maintain that no one among all the religions holds as firmly those holding Christ as their backbone.. He is the only one who places Himself as a living and everlasting basis of all religious life on which everything depends. Therefore He is the content of faith. He is the head and the heart of Christianity. Bethlehem’s night unraveled the greatest religious problem, namely the relationship of man to God and the solution to life. Besides, there never was and is no religion which bore such a longing and desire to join earth and heaven with God. The appearance of the Son of God who dwelt in a tiny, weak flesh of a baby pulled all human flesh toward God, and led mankind into the current of life and humanity into the internal temple of God. In the mystery of Bethlehem’s night, what was fulfilled was the “kingly work” of God, because perfection intertwined with imperfection, eternity with temporality, so that the power and wisdom of God proved to be somewhat higher here, sooner than when heaven and earth were created. Now I understand these apparent opposites, when Scripture, on the one hand praises the greatness of man, and on the other hand paints his deprivation and lowliness. Only until that miraculous night, the angel, announcing the Birth of the Lord to the shepherds could brazenly announce: “I bring joyful and great news to all people, for this eternal beauty was poured upon us, that from being prisoners you now have become children of God, your wounds have been healed, your misery brightened by God’s majesty. It is for this reason that Gregory writes: I am small but actually I am great, - mortal and at the same time, immortal, of the earth and, of course, immortal.” Greatness, loftiness and the nobility of human nature flow from the stable at Bethlehem and the significance of this night reaches out from age to age and the greatness and worth of him is the underpinning and motor of Christianity, which and at the same time a call for love of neighbor and personal freedom. The miraculous birth reaches with its power not only from the past but it builds a connection between God and mankind and is the foundation for the future. It’s power is as vital today as it has been through the ages. Its substance has lived throughout the generations, and its worth depends on humanity, culture and civilization. We have a great love for Bethlehem; our soul is engaged in tender carols, which in plain words give glory to the Christ Child and give fervor to the soul, by the testament of the greatness and love which encapsulates this mystery of the untold treasure that it is that the Son of God came to the earth, and showed the world endless treasures of wisdom, power and love, and brought a plenitude of gift s with which he enriched us all. The Feast of the Birth of Christ is a Feast of Truth, Love, Brotherhood and Peace. And where is that awaited, looked for Peace which is so sought for? Even in the Holy Land to which Christ came, there was a lack of peace and a time of war. The Holy Land is in devastation. It has been some time now that humanity has established institutions to secure a lasting peace. We have has the League of Nations, the United Nations and International tribunals to assure its existence. They all were crippled, wavered, and were broken up. Do you remember what happened to the League of Nations? It died, and was buried and no one shed a tear. Currently (at that time) exists the “United Nations” It arose in order to “keep the peace.” All these attempts, organization, tribunals, leagues etc.. were and are powerless and as someone said, ”made a mockery out of the word, “peace”. What profit would it be to humanity, to me, to you, to anyone; to think of the mystery of the happenings at the Stable in Bethlehem and not accept the teaching and the example of the Christ Child? How does humanity profit on the day of the Prince of Peace as it turns its thoughts to Bethlehem and its Stable and wonders at memory of the little Baby when as the day goes that the vision fades and everything that it teaches, imagines, and stands for disappears? From the day of the Lords birth, the Lord who was the Master, the Prince, and Teacher of Peace, there never has been a lasting peace and never could be! There were breaks, few and in between warring factions on earth. There was no solid, lasting peace because the world had not known the teaching of the Master from Nazareth. After the historical and miraculous entry into the world, little has changed, little happened for better. The new teaching of love, foregiveness and humility did not meet the agreeability of the people. What? “What!? They exclaimed are we educated people to listen to a weak baby born in an rickety stable? Listen to a teaching that is against the nature of people, which cramps their life style and personal freedom? And so forth…And so forth! And that teaching of love and peace not known up until then was foreign and so became rejected and disliked. The teaqching is not found in families, in societies, and not found in nations. Today again this Prince of peace comes to the world.and brings His peace. True peace. It comes again in this age with the same aim, He brings it, this Prince of Peace as he brought it for two thousand years. He comes again in our age this Prince, Master, and Teacher of peace. His birth again reminds us that the human heart should get rid of self-love, greed, and replace them with brotherhood and goodness. It reminds us that the human heart should get rid of hatred, disgust, and contempt and fill it with neighborly love. It reminds us that the heart should abandon falsehood, lies and hypocrisy and replace hem with truth, honesty and straight-talking. It reminds us that all of us need to constantly and without stop heed the teaching coming from the stable at Bethlehem. All the striving and effort of the human intellect of itself, no plans will bring peace to the people unless they are open to the word of the Master Teacher of Peace who began at the stable and ended up on a cross. It is the way of good will. A teaching coming solely from the human intellect manufactures ill will. And molds the people greedy for fame and domination, people seeking treasures and riches. People, who turn away for moral worth and fill the mind, heart and soul material worth. Looking at that Crib, let us make a decision that from this day on, we will stand as men of good will. The Christ Child came into this world with love for mankind which He had created, to a man who will manage to be noble and good. In mankind which manages to have a faith that has goodness and worth and acts accordingly. It is not true that people are bad by nature, that they are fundamentally bad. In the same vein it is not true that life has to be sad and miserable. Let only people turn to the meaning of the table, the Christ Child and pay heed to His directives. They will see a different world a world that does not fill us with fear. The Newly born Jesus brought with Himself from heaven the following directive: “I give you a new commandment: Love your neighbor as I have loved you. The second directive is akin to the first: You shall love your neighbor as you do yourself. The Child Jesus waited and waited for the people, who not only listened to what he said but who took the teaching into their lives and brought into their life the reality of the words. They accepted it into their hearts. Others said: “Nothing will come of this and left Him. Evil was victorious. Each person needs to do battle with himself, and each is responsible for his life, and no one can free himself of his own responsibilities. We know from history as well as from personal experience - No one can liberate them from this obligation. And no one can liberate a person from the suffering he has to go through to achieve his self-improvement. We know from History that the goodness of man can deliver victory and triumph. Have we not in our lives met individuals who were examples of love, great mercy, and great sacrifice. What is it that inspires them to this great dedication? It is the love of neighbor and the Christ Child. The way to this exemplary love we must learn to follow if we wish to change the world for the better. But that is not all – we must strive to make the world a better place to live in. The resources we have at hand to better the world are available to us, in order to improve understanding and agreement among nations, to spread global peace. There is an old recipe given us by Christ. Seeking other means coming from our own intellect is an escape and a compromise of Christ’s teaching. The call of the Lord is plain: no one can claim that it is impossible to carry out in our lives. To change people for the better is not to look for new means to do that, to look for new roads, new methods. It is a matter of fighting evil head on, evil that is inside of us as well outside. One must have the constant awareness of the power we have within us: Them we can stand as people of good will and the promised peace will be ours.