**December 26, 1943**

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

Once again, we stand on the doorsteps of a new time, a New Year. On Friday night at twelve noon, the door will be closed on the previous twelve months, known as 1943, and at the same time 1944 will begin - a New Year and a new time. What will it bring us? No one knows and no one can even guess. We are aware of what the previous year has brought us; we have lived them, but the future is dimmed for us. Each year at the change of years, people wish each other the best. They wish and nothing else. And time runs on like a stream in the woods, like the flow of a river, like the waves of an ocean which toss us in various directions. What is certain is that we are one year closer to our death. That, we know! It suffices to look around us. Here was a man; he is gone. Some went to sleep forever. Those you will find in the cities of the dead. Others lie in hospital wards. Finally several million young are in concentration camps; other millions are on the fields of war. Death flies in the air. It swims in the oceans. It walks the earth. And not only on the fields of battle. Up to this date more civilians, women and children who are not soldiers marines or pilots. A sadness grips one and a disturbed look when seeing ruins and the debris of churches, hospitals, schools, factories, hotels and houses of workers. This is the way I felt when I looked at the destruction of British cities and towns. And this is just a drop in the bucket compared with what is happening in occupied nations invaded by hoards of civilized barbarians. Over there, every country is one big national cemetery, one great concentration camp where tears, despair, doubt, and uncertainty is the daily bread of a depressed suffering people. It is salutary to give these thoughts some time because while these peoples suffer people here will be partying from midnight Saturday until morning. In the occupied countries there are tears, with care so that the enemy would not hear them: "Deliver us lord from the air, hunger, fire and war!" And we? What will we do during these first hours of the New Year? We are Christians and Catholics. Our obligation is to empathize with our neighbor, especially with those unjustly persecuted. Understanding this state of affairs, our talk today is entitled:

YESTERDAY - TOMORROW

We are in one of the British coastal towns. I chose this town and no other, because we have a palpable reason and a real picture of that which time brought its denizens; we will name it "yesterday". It is a shocking scene. There are homes in debris from roof to cellar. The only thing left was a number of skeletal walls. And these are beginning to fall dangerously and need to be dynamited. The debris so filled the streets that one can hardly walk on them by foot. Bombs and artillery from a distance have ruined the greater part of buildings with devastation everywhere. Roofs hang in the midst of stairways. One cannot find a home in which there is still a window pane intact. The plaster of the apartment houses is hacked apart by missiles. Destroyed roadways block traffic into and out of the city. Only a skeleton of the town survives - a skeleton of burnt walls and burned out buildings. The people bombardment of the town left its citizens as nervous wrecks. Some had to run for their lives to avoid wounds or death. Thousands of people ran out into the streets seeking safety in shelters. They were not prepared because the enemy chose different times for the onslaught. The attacks would begin anywhere between four in the morning and lasted to seven or later during winter. The people roamed through streets amidst the rubble. Time after time bombs fell from airplanes and strafing brought death or wounding. It was impossible to rescue them. The stood in a place awaiting merciful death. Some remained in their homes. If a bomb happened to hit rarely did people escape death or serious wounds. The died horrible deaths with wall falling upon them. And it wasn't any better in shelters underground if a bomb managed a direct hit. They were covered with debris. Going through the streets one can smell the corpses underneath the debris. Yesterday, not long ago there was motion and signs of life, but today? One could hear the clink of shovels and pickaxes, volunteers working, digging out the killed, the murdered. This was total war, destroying the work of years and the tradition of Christian culture. The people of this city asked themselves: "what will the future bring?" and "what has it brought."

The road is impassable. There is no possibility of hurried travel. Trucks, wagons and hoards of people on foot. All of this coalesced into on great mass on the road. Wagons hold groups of people. Wagons are overweight tolerance but stain to move forward. To reach the forest where the enemy would not find targets. On their faces suffering makes its mark. They are covered with dust. Some women sob. Their homes are destroyed or burnt and left behind. They were left with their lives which they instinctively tried to save. Suddenly the whistle of bombs. The enemy flies in the air. All lift their heads to the sky. They search. They keep their eyes on the enemy planes. Dumbstruck they stand in horror. Someone shouts. The people freeze. Some throw themselves flat on the roadside ditches. Others run into fields hiding in furrows. In their haste they fall, get up, run further. No doubt that these people had already experienced the horror before. There were those petrified in horror who stayed where they were. Here goes a one horse wagon with no one in it; they jumped out and sit in the ditch. A young lady jumped from a truck and hides under the wagon. Someone drags her by the legs to a ditch. At that moment a bomb hits nearby on the road. The wagon and horse disappear. Rocks fly over our heads. On the road, a massacre. Trucks bent like tin cans lay inoperative. Many people are wounded. Horses released from their wagons trampling everything in their path. Again, bombs. Strafing. Then silence. People rise. They carry the wounded. These poor people. What happened today? What will they encounter tomorrow.

Here are the conditions under which the Polish man works. "The conditions for working in the factories is neither easy or likeable. Work goes on day after day. A day without arrests seldom occurs. The workshops need to be watched and workers and their families must be rescued from starvation or taken to Germany. Days go by quickly at work. The mind is distracted from everyday worries. Work rescues many men, who were freed from the demoralizing idleness without work. At the break for food we sit to the popular "eintopfgericht" in Poland - soup and kasza with potatoes, or with fruit, sometimes with a bit of meat. Everyone sits and common tables. About 5 o'clock we return home from work. On the way we listen to the radio for news. The news either rejoices or saddens. The best news is when we hear of the successes of the R.A.F. At home, perhaps there will be news from our dear ones. Perhaps from the concentration camps, perhaps with the merciless words: "So and So died. The body will be burned and the ashes sent to the family. Today, one cannot buy a news paper. One has to benefit from the few hour available to accomplish some tasks and do some visiting. In the winter there are only two hours available because already at 7 o'clock in the evening one cannot go out onto the streets. In the summer the hour was set at 10 or 9. In the morning one could go out at 5. However in the afternoon, whoever does not have to go out, it is better for him to sit at home. Loitering about town or inhabiting coffee houses ends up with sitting in prison or in a camp. The raids generally are done in coffee houses. Men are dragged from the streets, trains, stores or such establishments and sent to Germany. A majority of those especially the intellectuals are sent to concentration camps where many die of torture. Dusk falls over the city, a city in ruin, a city of heroes, quiet nameless heroes fighting with bottles with benzene against the enemy: parents fighting for their children, who are dragged from their arms, for their daughters, attacked by criminals, Poles, trying to save their culture in the midst of the attacks of the wild barbarians. Tired people return in hoards from vegetable gardens where they could get away from having no work and glad to work a little plot of ground from which they could get a livelihood. The gardens have potatoes and other vegetables. Winter is coming with no work again. Lights go out early. Police patrol the streets. The echo of gunfire is heard: some atrocity by the Gestapo, merciless killers. Will tonight bring us rest from the day's realities? Behind all doors there are menacing factors. Death may come in the guise of brown uniforms with green collars. Will we be spared today? Understand what yesterday brought?

Tears come to the eyes when one reads what Ignacy Morawski had to say: "He who is not familiar with Warsaw, needs to know that this is not an Italian cemetery nor even a planned cemetery like an American one, apportioned in precise ways. This is a special cemetery filled with many, many years of funerals, so that there are corpses in this cemetery than all the current people living in Warsaw. There are no plots available. The rows are very narrow and there are only a few main paths. After the capture of the town Powązki the cemetery became a horrific sight. Here and there were strewn the headstones of the graves, the mausoleums, little chapels were in ruins. Parts of copses hung on branches of trees. Parts of caskets were strewn around. Corpses could not be identified. Other evidences of war were apparent everywhere....

This is what occurred yesterday, even to corpses.

In October of 1939, while visiting camps were troops were deployed, I asked about the conditions and circumstances of the experiences of the men. I received quite a few stories. One was such: "We arrived in Sniatyn about midnight. The town was empty and the gates of the town were closed. Thousands of cars and a dark cloud of people. We moved very slowly step by step and stood for long periods of time...two kilometers in eight hours. Above the gate was written "ROMANIA". Looking backward I saw the long lines awaiting their turn. That was my last memory of Poland. War is in itself a horrible thing. Everyone experiences dramatic moments. But there is no way that this tragic war plays a more devastating way than in the heart of a soldiers who had to surrender their weapons as they were crossing the border. All other moments pale in the midst of this hellish pain which we had to undergo at that moment. There are no words written or spoken that can communicate this experience. And when we looking deeper into the soldier's soul we can read it all. All can be forgotten; this could never be forgotten. But why grate further on nerves, why bring up physical and moral pain, which is already rusted with pain and tears. We travel further unarmed, in the mist of a Rumanian morning. The downpours continued.... this rain, which we breathed in Poland when we prayed. The rain would hamper enemy movements and the situation would be different. Therefore it rained the first day on Rumanian soil. This also fed our despair. And it continued to rain throughout the long days of our journey, rained non-stop and mercilessly.

Thoroughly soaked, cold, and sleepless, we travelled through towns and cities cornfields, and grape vined groves. We looked upon the peaceful quiet and simple life of the Romanians, which breathed in the sun of a freedom loving people but still we felt imprisoned. And so we passed many town and at last arrived at Bukarest. Then further through several towns until we ended our three week's travel. Soldiers, are you remembering all of this? Do you remember the days, eternal days, sad days without hope? Remember the long Rumanian days? Days, when our souls were in a lethargic fog. Souls have their own moral lethargy, and so our souls were in that state. We did not awake them, fortunately. A moral dream managed to submerge them. It brought them the strength and the effort to stick it out and motivate them to action. The Rumanian experience was a fortunate one. It protected us from moral depression, from dark melancholy and resignation. See what happened yesterday on Romanian soil when we were in exile.

Now, let us look at our country, look into our homes, look into our souls. We will see how many are the blessings, the gifts, and the graces received from the Providence of God. In the skies of our country not one enemy bomber has appeared. Not one bomb has fell on our people. There are not tanks adorned with the crooked cross or the setting sun. There are no raids by police patrols ore armed soldiers. There are no concentration camps or political prisons. Words do not narrate tragedies: expatriotism, expulsion, hanging fear, raids, singular and mass executions. No hunger invades us. Did you hear me? Have you ever thought about how million, yes millions are holding out their hands for a piece of bread, for a crumb of bread. Where women and children die of starvation?

Anything else? Well is your health and the health of your family have any meaning? Not everyone enjoys your health. For some, yesterday brought wounds even death. Yesterday many lost their health and lost their lives. Look into the hospitals where row after row there lay the suffering, crying and hurting. Look at the cemeteries at the new tombstones and the new monuments. Are you appreciative of your life and your good fortune and the mercy of God.

Do you know what it is to be a prisoner over which stands some guard with a Billy club in hand or a revolver in his grip. For what? To interrogated you spit in your face or beat you needlessly. I have personally talk with those who experience this. Some sat for months behind barbed wire at Oswiecim and Dachau. Others slaved at labor camps and were treated like animals. Beaten looked down upon and persecuted. This is what you endured yesterday. You, my man, have freedom, a freedom that no other nation has on earth. You have the freedom to praise God, you have the freedom of speech, you have the freedom to read what you want, to hear what you want. You can pray talk, read in the language of your fathers. Are you appreciative of the Providence of God which has kept you from indignities. What else has yesterday given you? A wife, and a mother, a husband, a father, and children. Your life follows a normal cycle, easily and peacefully within the confines of a family. You do not have the fear and despair of losing your family and friends who may be scattered all over the world. You have them by your side. Not all have that good fortune which is yours today. Do you understand yesterday's worth. God does not demand too much from us. He expects us to carry out our daily obligations, a faithful life, faithful to the commandments. Life does not consist of great, heroic deeds, but in our daily little occupations and happening the worth of human life. This is what takes up our time and our life. I understand that man in spite of his creation by the hand of the Almighty is weak and fallible creation and forgets his noble origin, his glorious goal, and praiseworthy meaning, falls. But that same person can lift himself up and even reach higher heights than others morally and spiritually. We all carry heavy loads of our past transgressions and errors. Do we wish to remove these falls and wipe them away from the book of life. Do we wish to start and clean slate in our life. In the last evening of the last day of the current year let us have recourse to our churches. There, on our knees let us thank God for yesterday's blessings, ask forgiveness for yesterday's faults. Let us look to the future with deep faith and strong hope. What tomorrow will bring...much very much more of mercies and the love of God under the conditions that we will be worthy of them. Let us say good-bye to yesterday with a thankful prayer and greet tomorrow with a prayer of supplication.