December 30, 1951

Dear Countrymen and Countrywomen, I greet you with the words: Praised be Our Lord, Jesus Christ!

I thought long, very long before I began to write this New Year’s talk. I fretted long, until I recalled the warning words of the Apostle Paul who wrote to the Romans: “It is indeed time, the season to wake from our sleep; for we are closer to our time of Salvation like never before believed. The night is over and the day has arrived. It is time to throw away our deeds of darkness and put on the daylight. Let us, as in the daylight, react with sincerity; not in revelry and drunkenness, not in obstacles to our goodness!” St. Paul wrote these words to the Romans who were not watchful of their behavior but careless in their coldness and envies having been converted recently from paganism to Christianity; he urged them to awaken from their sleep, to seek perfection in the Christian faith in conversion from paganism; not to return to their pagan and immoral ways but address their Christian way to perfection in the Faith. One has to realize that although many Romans were converted to Christianity, and got rid of paganism, they still did not give up some of their pagan ways. They were accustomed to their pleasure seeking ways; it was difficult to give up some of their sinful habits and their pleasure seeking and attachment to material things and to love their neighbor and the forgiveness for being hurt, piety, and penitential attitude which was not quite laughable. We are prone within our personal lives we give political excuses and arguments for our wayward ways. We blame the politicians and diplomats. Often we deny our own responsibility and blame God’s injustice with our lives. We ought to pay more attention to our own motives and wayward thinking. We are not aware of our own waywardness and not understanding of our true Teacher, Christ. We become lethargic and wish not to examine our own motivations. We are not as wise and discerning as we think we are. It is time, needful of our own short vision to be able to judge our spiritual and moral ways. And so, on to today’s talk:

LET US AWAKEN OUR SELVES

Tomorrow is the last day of 1951. Despite the fact that it is just about 365 days old – it will die. And on Tuesday we will speak about it as “old year”. That same history repeats itself year after year, and we do not note the fact that it will be a year closer to our demise. Regularly, every year, on the last day, which comes to its end, we look at the face of a clock as the time slips by, round and round, without end and instead of awakening, instead of rolling up our sleeves to work, we celebrate and make many resolution on how we will change in the next year. They are empty promises for we return to our old ways. Our plans and our aims and good intentions are forgotten. What are all these, if they are not turned into actuality, info real practical living? But we put off until tomorrow as if we were to live forever, in eternity and not the fifty, sixty, seventy of eighty year we have left on earth. Time flies. The clock does not stop but forges on constantly. You and I, we all, by the grace of God live only once. We have one life. The years gone by come only once and do not return. Yesterday is not ours again. Today belongs to us. Today it is not ours to stand by and watch it pass by with our arms folded. We need to wake up and take hold of the time we have – the time given to us by God. The Catholic Church calls its faithful to end the year prayerfully and so on Monday night there are devotions to thank God for the graces given in the year gone by. In some cases Sister Death has taken a loved one. Here, a working father, there a beloved mother; sadness followed by desperation. Here a healthy husband, there a young wife. Here a son; there a daughter. But, go from the town of the living to the town of the dead; walk slowly among the rows of the newly dug graves; the walk will give you plenty to think about. Perhaps you will hear the mysterious voices coming from the grave, in sadness that you are still among the living and the other is dead. Why the other and not you? And who knows whether some voice will remind you that the merciful God will not give you the time to work out your salvation. But have we thought about the time in which we could improve our salvific nature. Have we worked up treasures in heaven where the rust will not destroy nor moth consume nor thief deprive us of. Perhaps we have forgotten as Fr. Krzyzanowski states: ”Life is short, and one cannot willingly prolong it; it is sometimes so brief that the carpenter can make the cradle and coffin at the same time. Often the mother lies close to the remains of her daughter in the cemetery that if it were possible she could touch her. “our days are but a shadow on the earth and there is no lengthening to them.” Look at the year that ends on the morrow amid song and music on one hand and tears, complaints, and ill feeling, on the other hand – a year will no longer be. Look carefully, diligently, and with sound vision and ask yourself, but ask yourself sincerely in what manner you passed by each day of the waning year. It is profitable for you to do that. It is worth looking at the progress - what if we were to stand before God’s judgement this day? How would we fare, since no one knows the day nor the hour and one would have to make an accounting this moment. How would you consider the rest of your life. Since man is but a passing traveler in this life who under takes and concludes activities, he ought to remember that throughout his work, he should not forget about the possibility of losing his God or the heaven he should pursue, or losing his soul which so painfully was redeemed by his God. Man received his soul from the Creator, and into the same hands he must place this soul, which was paid for by the high price of the Savior’s blood. It is no wonder, then, that the Savior said, “What good does it do for man to gain the whole world but lose his own soul” What worth then is man’s soul? Everything that the world possesses, everything what it presents to people to gladden them, everything he makes use of – what worth is it if in the process he loses his soul? Material things are worth so much sand. Today or tomorrow after five or fifty years: we must leave it all. Want it or not, in the moment that our soul must leave our body, we must leave it all behind. There is no doubt about it. We do take something with us when we go into eternity – namely what we worked out for our souls, our God and for eternity; our good deeds with follow us into eternity; neither will the ground that covers us. So much in our current times is written and spoken about materialistic people. What does that really mean? It means that people neglected to seek spiritual growth and devoted more of their time to materialistic pursuits; that they are busy about temporary goods, amass money, always seek honors, killing within themselves instead of honorable pursuits. Physical health, long life, money, treasures, stomach, position; these that they always, forgetting about the soul’s worth! They take special care of their body, enjoy pleasures of life, and the soul which cries out for attention, is stepped on and neglected. Surely ,health is good since health is indispensable for one’s work, to take care of obligations assigned to it. Long life and elder age permits man to rest and be at peace and to benefit from work well done; money is good and needful for survival in the hands of a responsible person who is also concerned with his fellow man. Are all these goods necessary – surely but we need to be concerned about the needy, the orphan, the widow, the sick. But are material goods the only needs of humanity. First as the Catechism teaches us: man is on this earth to discover and love his Creator, his God in order to attain heaven. Isakowicz, wrote: “A robust health sometimes is a predictor of wrongdoing. Elder years are at times a predictor of a noble soul. White hair is a times not a sign of elderly life, says sacred scripture but the wisdom of God and a spotless life.” Money and many possessions give the resources to live a loose life and costly clothes do not always hide a sober and innocent soul and often old clothes hide an innocent soul. After all, the dignity and high dignity multiply oppression and reckless stepping on the rights of mankind, and the simple uneducated person and misery to the oppressed, the fatherless and the widow. Can these material goods be sufficient to human life? Check your conscience, take a look within your heart; look within your soul – if in the past year you were living only materially; whether you were only concerned for 12 months for the material intake of things which you cannot take with you when your life is over and you face God’s judgement and you must make an accounting of your daily life! – It is the responsibility of man to use time to gain eternal life, to work in order to achieve it. The prophet says in scripture to take a look at the ant and read the lesson of industriousness there. When will you begin to listen to awaken from your dream like snooze? Sleep and dream on, fold your arms and you will lack something essential – you will lack the real redemptive quality of life. Time is a gift of God. It should be used for our redemption. People waste time; using it sometimes doing things lacking more essential worth. Whoever wastes time in using it carelessly, being lazy and not understanding its worth, will not benefit of the time he has to earn in profit able industry and not recognizing it value for life in eternity. Ecclesiasticus has this to say: “all the days of such a life are pain, worry and annoying because there exists emptiness of heart with no peace. The Savior advises: “You know not the day, nor the hour.” By that, he meant that every moment may be the last moment of our day.” We read the obituaries of people dying a home, in bed, by the table, on the street, in the factory, in church, at work and at play. Staying in a tavern, holding a glass and expressing a toast and falling in death. Experience does not teach readily that the best laid plans of mice and men are often put asunder. The future may not be too long gone. Life has a degree of uncertainty. Human life is so uncertain that it needs to be ready at all time. If we had to give accountability this year, how would we fare? Would we be accused of wasting our time in careless activity and never thinking of the gift of our life and how to live it well? Our Lord in addressing the people, brought them to the attention saying that they ought to to, in the first place seek the kingdom of God and his justice, and all else will be given. Don’t be concerned too much about tomorrow; it will take care of itself. We hear the Lord’s criticism the over concern about material things, seeking them incessantly without regard to God and the soul and the hope in God’s assistance. Few people, very few people have a regard for the eternal life and work toward that objective. Some are too occupied with the daily grind; some think that religion demands too much of them; others put off the spiritual life for tomorrow. The first, put off their concern for later consideration; others forget the advice of the Savior:” “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my **yoke** upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my **yoke** is easy and my burden is light.” Those lack good judgement who put off their concern for eternal life for the future, for their old age. St. James says: “If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn’t do it, it is sin for them.” He couldn’t have said it better! And to those who put off their spiritual life, he says: “Do you not know what tomorrow will bring; for what is your life? It is as lasting as smoke which quickly disappears. While we live, let us do good.” No thinking person will think long range to fix something which he deliberately broke in the past; it would not be sensible for weekend and inoperative hands of an old man to pick up a heavy stone, which in his youth, when he was strong would take care of in one hand. And so the prophet, calling people to amend their lives, advises the cold hearted with these words: “ Don’t depend on the fact that God is always merciful, because He is also just, and so do not delay to come back to God and put aside amendment from day to day when his retribution is swift.” Perhaps these words refer to us if so, isn’t this the salutary time when we say good bye to the previous year and bring in the new? The old year is going away forever and the new one is beginning. And then another year, and then another, a third and a fourth, and so on, until our lives pass away. We then shall not be on this earth with no trace of us and we will be forgotten. No one will ever mention us – won’t even mention us. Every day, every hour, every moment brings us closer to death, to the grave, to eternity. Our daily life ebbs quickly away. And eternity? Eternity will not disappear; it will never end. And we will exist as part of that eternity. Let us take a look, not only on this year but at years passed; how long have we lived on this earth? Were they spent profitably? Will it be said about us that “our years like a web will be examined, perhaps empty, without good works, filled with flies and bugs. We will not all graces and goodness which we have not participated in. Let us ask ourselves whether we had cooperated with all graces given, opportunities given! Have we regarded that all that was given to us, thinking that we were simply given to us and we did not have to consider our response to that goodness. Let us recall, as professor Czepulewicz says, “Where all are those beautiful, wondrous, costly gifts given and where are they now? Many of them have deteriorated and are useless? And we learn from that, that perhaps our hearts were too attached to material things which will ultimately disappear from our lives. Where are they now? Let us use them as far as they contribute to our necessities in life and not put all our efforts in chasing the wind. Let us imitate the pilgrims who as they traverse various countries, they see much, hear much, but it all does not give them pleasure but they leave it without being sad or their ultimate concern is getting back to their country were they should be. Scripture echoes this: “And those who use the things of this earth should use them should do so as if they did not use them for all things pass by.” Today, let us bring to mind our forefathers, brothers, sisters, relatives, acquaintances, friends, and fellow workers and play mates. For the most part, where are they today? Perhaps they were wealthy, strong, and learned. Perhaps death did not spare them. Where they prepared to go or not? Why is it that we were spared. Was it that we could become worse? Why did God permit us a longer life? Sooner or later one will be called by sister death, whether wanted or not and must answer the short question: “what have you accomplished with your life? How did you spend your time?” Your eternity will depend on your answer. There will be no excuses and no avoidance. God will say:

“Lazy one, when you had the time to work you didn’t want to; now you beg! You used and consumed and now you want to buy heaven with excuses. You forget that when you had the time to took a lot for your benefit. You wasted time, spurned advice; now it is too late. Today, at this moment, louder than ever before, I hear St. Bernard’s words: “nothing is more valuable than time, but many do not put any value upon it; they run away from their day of salvation, and no one notes that, no one consider that the time that flies by does not return” Often especially on these last days of the current year, no one notes the significance of another year gone; we ought to ask ourselves we spent the hours and days; whether we lived according to the teaching of Christ? Are we preceding the straight and narrow road to the objective put forward by Christ? Have we met the obligation of our vocation or do we take the wide road to perdition, to a sad ending, in despair about which the scripture speaks: “there is a road which is easy going but the end ends in death. Thank God we still have time to awake and change direction, turning back to the good God who reaches out his hand and will lead us to a bright, peaceful year – 1952!!