**December 6, 1931**

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

Today is a historic day for all of us. For the first time, thanks to the radio, here in America, a Roman Catholic priest, a Franciscan Friar, the son of a poor Pennsylvania miner stands in front of a microphone in the city of Buffalo, NY, and his voice is heard far, far away, in houses scattered among the forests and prairies of Wisconsin; the same voice is a special guest in the households of Pennsylvania miners, for whom I have a special affection, as I see myself as one of them! Every Pole listening to me today should be happy that the day has come when our beautiful Polish language is broadcast via speakers to Polish colonies. I honestly admit that although I am eager to work, still alone I am too weak to bear the burden of emitting this Polish hour. I will be grateful for your help and your cooperation, which are not only desirable but necessary. And you can be sure that God will reward you a hundredfold for the goodness of your heart. This program, the first of its kind, will be entirely dedicated to our Polish fathers and mothers, those quiet and humble pioneers who have adorned the Catholic Church by their deep and modest faith; who have enriched America by their hard and constant labors; who have by their practical approach to life earned the praise of foreigners; and who have left us godly Polish virtues as their legacy. I repeat, it is to them exclusively that I, with a heart overflowing with love, respect and gratefulness, dedicate this program.

**Our Parents**

Let us go back 30 years in time! There was an event I remember till this day. A large family arrived in our town of McClure, PA. They came from far away, from across the ocean, from Poland. Already back then I admired them; I looked at the strange cut of their motley clothing, their colorful hats and peculiar bootees. I was surprised by their leaden movements, their hesitant gait and shyness of speech. They had come to their relatives, who only a few years earlier had themselves emigrated from Poland to America, and by dint of their toil, saved up enough to buy ship tickets and bring their relatives to America, to this Promised Land flowing with milk and honey. The first Saturday after the arrival of this group in our town, after work, the miners assembled to listen to news from their homeland, to find out how their relatives, friends and acquaintances were faring. I remember how all present almost devoured information from the lips of the newcomers, asking about everybody and everything. It was nearing midnight when the cross-questioning of the Polish immigrant, who spoke with tears of longing and yet pride, was brought to a close. Even I listened with interest and concentration, although I was getting sleepy. Finally the newcomer stood up and unbuttoned his shirt; right next to his scapular, close to his heart was a pouch with Polish soil in it. Each person present took the pouch into his hand and tenderly and reverently kissed it. And again warm, bitter, almost bloody tears flowed down the cheeks of our honest and work-worn fathers, down the cheeks of our God-fearing and virtuous mothers. For them, this handful of Polish soil was sacred, a symbol and a relic. Why? Because it held in itself the years of their childhood and youth; because it was a part of the once extensive and beautiful Polish land, covered with golden fields, which Poles love more than life itself; because this handful of soil reminded them of their family home, of their age-worn father and mother, of their brothers and sisters. They had before their eyes the village church where they were baptized, received First Communion, and vowed by the Altar of Our Lord to remain faithful to each other until death. They saw the cemetery with the graves of their forefathers, quiet, industrious, devout and God-fearing. They saw the whole country, stained with the tears and blood of their brethren, those who were persecuted, suffered torment and died martyrs’ deaths with the cry: “Everything for God and for our Homeland!” on their lips. All of this they underwent for their faith and their language. At that time, 30 years ago, I failed to understand how a handful of Polish soil could evoke the tears of this group of Polish miners. Today – I understand completely.

Now, dear Fathers and beloved Mothers, I address myself to you! Recall your Fathers and your Mothers - I will try to help you do so. Recall the last moments spent in your family home, in far-away Poland; recall the last farewell, the last advice, the parental blessing, finally the last kiss bestowed upon your brow by your parents. These memories may be sad, but they are also pleasant. Your Mother, at the time of parting, hung a scapular on your neck or placed a Rosary, medal or prayer book in your hands, saying: “Son, daughter, when in a far-away country, remember God and never forget your homeland; may God bless you and Our Blessed Mother have you in her care!”. Maybe today these words of parental blessing still ring in your ears. Many years later, I ask you (and this may be the first time this question has been so insistently and openly put): have you always loyally and conscientiously stood by the flag on which in golden letters these words shine: “God and Homeland”? Yes or no? If yes, than you have fulfilled the command of your fathers; if not, somewhere from up above your parents look down at you with sad, teary eyes.

Dear listeners, there is one more scene that I would like to paint before your eyes! We see our parents on the shores of our new, adopted homeland. Their only fortune is the clothes on their backs. Some didn’t have enough for a train ticket, some even came on borrowed money or thanks to a ship ticket sent to them. Certainly, poor in material possessions, but rich in good intentions, endowed with piety, faith, charity and trust. They left their homeland, their family home, parents, siblings and friends and came here – not so much for themselves, but for their children, that is, for us! So that life would be easier for us. So that we would be able to profess our faith, speak our language with no fear of imprisonment, exile or other types of persecution. So that earning our daily bread would be easier and our existence more stable. Thrown onto American shores, they scattered all over the United States. There where work was the hardest is where our parents found themselves… and immediately set to work! Dark and dangerous coal mines, smoking steel plants which wrought bloody sweat from their workers; smoke-belching mills; foul-smelling slaughterhouses; ship hulls; train tracks; canals; the gulfs of rivers… All of this brought them work, which was both hard and arduous yet underpaid. Our fathers who knew neither the language, the customs nor the traditions of America were taken advantage of every step of the way by their heartless employers. Their only reward was the name-calling and curses of the foremen, the invectives and manhandling of the bosses. And yet they did not lose their spirit. What is more, the difficulties they encountered developed a certain fortitude of character in them. They went on undaunted, building churches and schools, founding various associations, organizing rallies and celebrations, buying their own houses and… never forgetting about their siblings and friends in Poland. From their modest savings they sent money to aid their country. Gradually they became model American citizens, yet they never forgot their homeland. And above everything else, often at the cost of their own inconvenience or sufferings, they prized education as a way for us, their children, to lead better lives. They had our good at heart when they wanted to give us access to education, which would make us seem equal in the eyes of the often-falsely denominated Americans. And so our poor father toiled from dawn to dusk just like a mule in Pennsylvania mines, and our beloved mother saved on everything – for us! She was busy until the late evening hours, racking her brains about our future. Thank God that we had such virtuous and pious parents! Their efforts and endeavors were not futile! The present generation of American citizens of Polish descent is living testimony to the efforts of those Polish pioneers, famous for their Polish virtues! Let us truthfully admit that today we are equal to American citizens of other descent… It is not we who can take the credit for this, but our fathers and mothers! So many fathers and mothers who maybe prematurely departed this life because they thought too much of us and not enough of their own needs! Those fathers and mothers who never spared themselves because they wanted to spare us. Those fathers and mothers, who gave up essentials for us to have more and live more easily. Those fathers and mothers, who shortened their own lives so that we might live longer and more happily! Today, are we following in the footsteps of our fathers? They were uneducated simpletons, some didn’t know how to write or read (of course not through their own fault)… yet they did have God in their hearts. They loved and respected each other, doing well unto each other; their lives were virtuous and above reproach. Their efforts and endeavors, their sweat and even blood gave us an easier and more tasteful bite of daily bread, gave us comforts they feared to dream of. Yes… They loved God and their neighbors, and in spite of the hostile environment, in spite of countless difficulties, their life was not wasted; they reached their goal and today we live much better.

Dearly beloved listeners, right now before my eyes I have the figure of my worthy daddy, who surely is listening to my words now. Let me describe him in more detail, as he is the type of an “old campaigner”. He was a strict yet loving father. He had us children in military order; trained us according to a military-type discipline; he punished disobedience justly and rewarded diligence, efforts and obedience abundantly. He himself walked 5 miles everyday, on foot in rain and storm, by night and day to get to his job in the coking plant. For the cents saved by this he bought us candy. How many times I saw how his legs refused to carry him further and he would sit down by the side of the road and rest; how many times I heard the impatient boss (who was of a different nationality) call him “Polack”, and he stood there with tears in his eyes listening to unjust accusations! How many times I heard him saying “Hail Mary” on the way to work, in the intention of his children, tenderly begging our Lady to take them into her care. The happiness of his children was what he spoke and dreamed of! He was interested in our work, our studies, our games. The children waited for him to come from work with longing. When his figure appeared on the hill half a mile from our home, we raced to him. Why? Because we knew that Dad would deprive himself of the most tasty morsel and bring it back home in his breadbox as a reward for the child who reached him first! Pious, diligent, sober and honest. This is the faithful image of all of our fathers all over the United States, it seems to me. And what can I say about our mothers? No human word, no praise could justly express the love, sacrifice and diligence of our mothers. The Polish Mother (Matka Polka) is a martyr to her vocation, and her most glorious and long-lasting tribute are the groups of children over whom she stretches her protective wings, visible and tangible proof of the presence of guardian angels. She had no respite, neither in daytime nor in nighttime. She laughed with us, and she cried with us! She rejoiced with us, and she ached with us. Our beloved and excellent Polish mothers… May God give them a long and peaceful old age as a reward for the devoted work they did for our sake!

What comes to my mind now is the reasoning of a Polish peasant, described by our Bolesław Prus: “So be it”, sighed the peasant, “I can see that they have more reason then I do; but when it comes to holding out, they can’t beat me, that’s for sure! Look”, he added after a moment, “how many woodpeckers sit on one tree, and every single one pecks at it. So what? The woodpecker finally leaves, and the tree remains a tree. It’s the same thing with the peasant. His master sits on him … and pecks; his local government sits on him… and pecks; a Jew sits on him... and pecks; a German will sit on him and peck, but no one will manage to win.” Is that not what heartless employers, unjust supervisors and wicked exploiters tried to do with our fathers… but they didn’t manage to win either! Why? Because with faith in their hearts, trust in their souls and prayer on their lips our fathers steadily rallied around the lofty battle cry: “God and our Homeland!”

Dearly beloved listeners! What our fathers could do, so can we and so much easier it is for us! We need only to remain in peace and unity with each other, and our Heavenly Father’s blessing awaits us! Let the faith, labor, peace and perseverance of our fathers be our pride, and then we will have the aid of Divine Providence and a happy life.

Let us be model, hard-working, sober and peaceful citizens of this country; let us keep the flag with “God and our Homeland” waving high above our heads. Because under this flag is our life and death, and in this flag… is earthly happiness and eternal bliss.