December 9, 1934

I greet you all, noble countrymen and countrywomen, with the words: Let Jesus Christ be praised.

On Tuesday, the day before Thanksgiving, I was going to Taunton, Mass., to be present for the Silver Jubilee of our parish. It was about nine o'clock in the evening, when I exited the friary, on my way to the railroad station. As I walked down the street, I noticed that on the other side of the street was a lady and a little girl by her side. Ostensibly, by the light of the street lamp they noticed me and recognized me because the little girl tugged at the woman's sleeve and they crossed the street. I stopped and waited. The woman was like an oak. I don't think she was more that 35 years old. She was being led by a little guardian angel, her daughter. The woman staggered from side to side dragging with herself the little girl once to the right, once to the left. And so she proceeded. She stopped in front of a store window displayed by lights. What a terrible sight. A reddened face, flashing eyes, hair covering her eyes; tired from tipping a whiskey glass. She leaned against a porch to rest. Even her rest was in her way of her thinking, because she coughed and wheezed as if she wanted to warn passers-by that the end of the world was coming. She licked her lips. Something must have stuck in her throat for she spit as if an officer in the artillery. At the same time, the little girl stood guarding the mother still holding on to the mother's hand. She wanted her to move on. It seemed that the mother did not move or could not move along. She looked awkwardly at the little girl. When the mother glared at passers-by, the girl, ashamed, bowed her head and worked her way slowly home. The mother followed staggering from one side to another like a bobbing ship. In my life, I did not see anything more pathetic that the picture of this sad situation because it was a picture of a drunken woman, wife and Polish mother. For this reason, the title of this broadcast:

ALCOHOLIC MOTHER

Concerning taking advantage of the gifts of God, I am not a bigot. What God has created, he destined for moderate use for human beings. I am reminded that in 1932, denouncing the prohibition, I called out, "What to the citizens think about the thousands of speakeasies which sell the use of the poisonous vodka and other countless mixtures, to the masses of drinkers, even boys and girls under twelve years old. Government statistics show that before prohibition, drunkenness was lessening and at the outset of prohibition, alcoholism actually grew. Before the prohibition drunkenness was unknown among students of higher education and well brought up children. Today, the question of drunkenness is a question of higher education. And underage drinking is part of the culture, even among children of the best families, is brazen enough to go to any kind of party with a supply of liquor. And that's just the beginning. At least two generations go by before Americans can get rid of drunkenness after the lifting of prohibition. Truly, to our embarrassment and humbling, today we are witnesses of sad scenes. Getting used to something gets to be second nature. Prohibition raised drunkenness to the character of cunning, courage, and heroism. In a word, it ennobled drinking. payable by the prophets, siding with the reformers , cried the loud thunder of applause, "let us turn our prisons into factories or pantries. Men will walk straight, ladies will walk with quiet smiles, and children with loud laughter." In the meantime we are building larger prisons; men are poisoning themselves and lying in coffin fields; women are despairing; children fall to the guns of gangsters. We have made for ourselves hell on earth.

Two years ago I spoke against prohibition. Prohibition is a government pruning of personal freedom and natural law given to us by the Creator. Today I consider to alcoholism, which is again an abuse or self gratification through which a rational man, willingly gives himself into personal prison and slavery which is one of the basest human inclinations. Prohibition and alcoholism are two opposite poles around which human being revolve. They are two apparent ends. In reality they are two abuses, not counting on the goodness of man, two masterpieces of God's creating hand. Without further explanations I submit the following letter written by a young man from Chicago, Ill, on the thirtieth of November of the current year.

Dear Father,

I am at a loss as to whom I should address my complaints. What should I focus on in our home. Often I think, go into the world among strangers where my eyes will not focus on what happens at home. I have one brother and one sister. My brother is fifteen years old; my sister,16! Our father has always been an alcoholic. Even in the best of times, he rarely worked, and what he earned he spent on drinking. My mother went to work in town. I don't know what happened to her. A year ago she changed and began to drink. Now I don't know who drinks the most. It is true, however, that my mother still works three times a week but goes out in the evening and sometime comes home later than father. Then they argue and curse. My younger brother, not being supervised, began to steal whatever he could. The police caught him. Currently he is on probation, but he hasn't improved. I saw him filtering his father's pockets. My sister is even worse. Several times a week she goes to road-houses from which they bring her unconscious. I criticize her behavior but to no avail. She tells me: "I am no worse that father or mother."They are setting the example I am only following it. Why shouldn't I take all I can, life is such a short thing." Our whole family is destroyed with the drinking. People are laughing at us. I am ashamed to go to church on Sunday.

And so, my dear listeners, the scenario of human life, which, looking upon, I am reminded of the destruction of Jerusalem. Each person, as reminded by the Apostle, is the temple of God. The disease of alcoholism destroys the foundations of this temple, because it destroys health, destroys harmony, negates peace, brings hatred, gives bad example, poisons the mind and soul, leaving behind it a moral desert, sadness and pain. Some think to themselves why talk about such trivial things. I ask why not expand on them. The ancient Romans, in order to create a distaste for drunkenness, made their inmates drunk in order to show the children the unfortunate state of drunkenness. True, we do not have the gumption to look truth in the eye. Truth often is distasteful. We play the naiveté of the ostrich with his head in the sand. This bird has a long neck, large wings, useless for flying, and long legs. They are often found in the desert of warm countries. When it danger it puts is head in the sand thinking that if he does not see the enemy the enemy does not see it. It finds death. We are similar to the ostrich. On seeing the enemy we close our eyes and fall victims to our enemies.

The sacrifices of alcoholism. How many I come across in my lifetime...men, women, young men and women. Young and old. About three years ago I had a sick call from one of the local hospitals. I was familiar with the patient. At one time he was in a business with his wife. It went well, but unfortunately it went to his head. He began to gamble and play cards all night at times. His wife had to get him for observation then to a home for the insane. He was 35 years old. When I stood at the side of his bed, he was bound in a straight jacket. My reaction was to shake like a leaf. He was a shadow of a human being, a skeleton, his hands bloody from biting on them mercilessly. On the wall near the bed as far as he could reach he dug out holes half an inch long. Looking upon this result of alcoholism, I thought to myself: If I could bring together thousands of our people so they could look upon this victim of alcoholism; I wonder how much good that sight would affect their lives? How many it would frighten away from drinking and bring them to their senses.

In another establishment for the insane, I met a young Polish flower, a girl. A model of physical health. However, a mental case. The nurse unwillingly relates her history. She had good parents, perhaps too good for they treated her more from the heart than from the head. God had gifted her with many aptitudes. She received a very good job with a large company. She found herself in the company of elitist people. She found fellowship which pleased her. The Creator gifted her with beauty, many invitations to the theatre and dances. Wanting to be a good sport, and fond of popularity she went out every night. She burnt the candle at both ends. She sought forgetfulness in the glass. The parents instead of reprimanding her, were happy of her fortune and happiness. People do not have nerves of iron or steel. Cigarettes and vodka were victorious. One morning, they did not bring their daughter home from the dance at one of the big hotels, but took her to the sanitarium. The police notified her parents that their daughter because of stress and mental exertion and also the abuse of liquor went mad, fell into a frenzy, which one is never released. Again, alcoholism cut down a flower, which fell suddenly and unexpectedly. Another life wasted, and fortune bankrupt ed. Today a cripple stands as a monument of excessive drinking. Already I hear voices saying that it is an exception. I dare to say that that is exception happens too many times. Too many of these happenings create too many sad situations which shame us. A few weeks ago, I was in West Hazleton, Pa. at a Forty Hours devotion at the parish of Father Dominiak, Pastor. There I was in the company of thirty priest who were celebrating and in whose company, I was praising today's youth. Upon returning to Buffalo on Wednesday morning, the 21st of November, they brought me hundreds of letters from various localities, among which were several from Buffalo. In one of them I read: "On Sunday there was a dance at the N.N. I saw a group of young ladies from your parish. They were generally well behaved until they went to the bar. I am no longer a youth but I have seen a good share of life. I am not too conservative but look upon things with an open mind. I am not speaking of the dances because they are the same at every dance. These girls were drinking with their boyfriends. Beer was not sufficient for them. High Balls and straight liquor. I speak of them not with anger. If you do not believe me, father, ask those workers at the newspaper. They were there, and so they were witnesses." What do you think my response will be to that comment? Nothing. I held my head down, ashamed, and I wait and I will wait.

Here, in our parish we have a honest and exemplary family, Poltowicz. I personally know them for 2o years. The father had died. He had been a hard working and caring father. The mother still in mourning, brought up the children with care and properly. In the family however, there was a black sheep in the person of Walter. Warnings and pleading went nowhere. Days, evenings and even all night he spent in bad company. He was friendly with a sharp billiard player who was an expert in modern dancing. According the Police in 37 years he had 28 arrests. Several times he was arrested. He had a black past. He constantly caused grief to his family. One Sunday early at two o'clock in the morning he came to his mother's house. He kicked the door and shouted for the door to be opened. The family was frightened when his mother opened the door. Walter ran into the house like a madman. He had a knife in his hand. He cursed his mother and spoke impurely at his sisters and the family. He was warning them that he would kill them. The whole affair ended tragically because the father-in-law grabbed a gun in order to protect the family; he shot Walter. He died on the operating table in the emergency room. The protector of the family gave himself up but was acquitted by the judge as everyone expected.

From time to time, I visit various jails. State prisons - city jails, reformatories, detention homes for young and old, Good Shepherd homes for girls. I always talk to the inmates. The older inmates always blame alcoholism for their fall. After excessive drinking, they robbed, stole, even murdered. Now they are sorry for what they did. Young men and women sit behind bars because either a mother or father drank excessively, but more often the father. Often disenchanted teens seeks escape in the first available company where the dear beer glass or whiskey glass confers forgetfulness. Then it's time to pay with hangovers. The wounds and scars of overuse do not heal.

In 1911 in a convention on international hygiene, statistics were published in an educational survey. It was established that among the nations, drunkenness resulted in the following:

60 to 70 percent of tuberculosis mainly among workers

50 percent insanity and nervous disorders

50 percent numbskulls and idiot

50 percent death among infants

50 percent murders

50 percent divorces

50 percent accidents on railroads and factories etc.

60 percent rapes and wounding

70 percent beggars

70 percent contagious diseases

80 percent robberies

This statistical survey should be printed and hung near the dinner table in the kitchen of every Polish home. Perhaps it would have some effect.

Two years ago I was travelling to Hamburg, N.Y., a nearby town. We came to the intersection of Big Tree Road and South Park Avenue and saw to vehicles overturned. By one of the cars lay two corpses, that of a man and a woman. Nearby two accident victims were dying. They died shortly afterwards. What happened? Two furriers, delegates, were returning from a conference in Brooklyn, N.Y. One of the delegates was from Vancouver, B. C. They had taken with themselves a bottle of vodka. The arranged a race between themselves. Speeding at very high speeds they slammed into a truck which carried Polish farm workers. In the blink of an eye: four corpses. Why? Drunk driving.

How many good wives and dedicated mothers cry bitter tears because the drunk husband has no mercy and ruins his health through drinking and creates havoc in the family. How many are there like this? Legions! How many good, hard working men, curses in anger, because their wives fell in love with cocktails and high-balls and instead of being caretaker of home and family became a family destroyer? How many fathers and mothers despair because their son or daughter on whom they relied, joined the worshipers of the bottle. How many innocent children cry and complain, is hungry, is deprived because the father drinks his salary away and hurts the family. How many, this very moment, listening to this program are uttering this prayer: Dear God, give him the grace of sobriety so that he would become a good and sober father" You do not believe? This is a letter written from Wyandotte, Mich., twelve year old girl, "Please say something about excessive drinking. Our father is an alcoholic. He works little, even though there are five of us at home. We lack warm clothes for the winter. We never had boots. Father does not care about us. When he gets paid he doesn't bring the money home. Sometimes he is not at home for several days. Mother is sick over it all! She hasn't gone to church in years.