FEBRUARY 13, 1938

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

As a prefix to today’s talk, I will read two letters. They are far more eloquent than my ineffective words and often too weep in order to present a realistic portrait of life’s realities. The need was to awaken the consciences and souls of people from the coldness of carelessness to build up in them the noble and the virtuous sentiment which agree with the goodness and goals of reasoning people. The first letter goes to the heart of the matter. Listen: “on January 30, 1938, during the Rosary Hour. – I listen to Father Justin on the radio. In today’s lesson Fr. Justin, only criticized Fathers only about drinking excessively. But the fact is that 98 percent of drunken Fathers, many of them, were good husbands until their wives became shrews who tortured their and drove them to drink. In many families, lie is unbearable not because the husband was bad, only that the wife drove him to it because there was no joy at home and no order to be found when the husband comes home. He slams the door and goes away so he doesn’t have to hear the nagging wife who doesn’t want to face criticism. I know that from the experience not only from nineteen years of being a factory worker in Detroit and Holyoke where I worked. Father Justin, would you please read my story. Maybe someone will back me up. In another letter to some poor chap tells it like it is: “Father Justin! For fourteen months I worked without a break and drank no liquor, with the exception of some beer on Sunday. Then we went on strike at work. It was not my fault. Others went on strike and I had to go with them. From that time on, my wife began to bug me on every occasion. I sought work from morning until evening. You can’t buy work. As soon as I returned home from seeking employment my wife began: why am I not working, why won’t they hire me. If she knew our state of affairs, she would not have married me; that she had it better with her parents. I tried to persuade her to be patient, to understand that I am looking for a job, that eventually they will open the factory. But she would not even listen. Three months ago, she left me and went to her mother. I was so frustrated that I went to the bar room and drank three whiskies. From that time, I am in the saloon and drink daily. What am I to do? Sit at home and look at blank walls. I go to the bar for recreation. We play cards and drink. I am not responsible for that. I my wife had left me alone and stayed with me; I never would have gotten into the drinking. After reading these two sincere outpourings, to my talk.

WOMAN – CREATOR OR DESTROYER

The hand of a woman not only rocks the cradle. The hand of a woman shakes the whole world. She rocks the world since she is the motor behind the family and domestic life. How the wives and mothers fare so do the families, so does the society, and so do the nations. Someone once wrote: “Women either create or destroy the good of the family. Their upbringing tends to create and avoid ruin. Who does not see and who does not admit even in darker times that both physical and moral health and happiness either in the family or the society begins with a practical care of a woman, a wife and a mother? No other human being on earth has before herself a work so noble and its calling to this effort as does a woman. She needs to be a biblical mother and manly in her work as a ship, bringing nourishment from afar, and gets up a night and prepares food for those in her care; whose hands are busy in a noble work, who holds her hand out to the poor; who like the sun rising in then high; that is the beauty of a good wife to her sons, and her wife praised her. A Polish author wrote: How lovely is the home for the man, if in it he always found good order and how dear his wife would be caring and remembering his needs It is not possible for a husband not to love such a hearth for he will not find it elsewhere. He comes back from work with satisfaction and when away from it, he is lonely.” Kraszewski wrote: “There exist no sweeter and more powerful knots than the knot of family love. There is no greater hate, than the hate of an abandoned home. The family home is our temple, our school, the wife is first priest, and the father is the best guardian. Under the family roof are tucked away all of our treasures.” Why did ancient writers pen these words? Why were our homes also our temples and schools? Because of our good and virtuous wives and mothers. They were manful women because they were hard-working, enterprising, hospitable, and having the skill to maintain household unity. They were peaceful not fining any fights of disagreements. It is so because the home was alive with a sincere love, wholesome and Christian about which Pius XI wrote: “it appears to be an act in progress.” No wonder than that a farmer returned from work to his home with a song in his heart as if he were entering a palace; with a smile on his lips the official came home after a day’s efforts with joy in his heart to a welcoming and caring wife. He found the home in order; everything was in its place. The children were clean and hair-combed. Dinner was ready. The food was plain but tasty. The poor husband forgot about his troubles, about the unpleasant events of the day. He found his home a refuge from world’s storms; his home was the heavenly abode of peace and healing. His wife was the guardian angel of all. He trusted his wife with everything. The wife was a real house hostess, and a secretary at the same time; she was the whole corporation. Without her help he could do nothing. Without her ok, he wouldn’t spend a cent. Even nowadays our older fathers say: “We need to consult mother; let us see what she has to say; without mother we cannot do this; I will agree if mother agrees” Obviously such a wife always was a husband’s trusted co-worker and friend in marriage, and all the difficulties and problems in running a family household rested on her shoulders. Mother thought about everything and took care of it. Our mothers did not know all the secrets of cooking, baking, frying, and marinating or had gone to culinary schools. They learned it all from their mothers. Today everything is after the new mode. The young housewife knows how to drive a car but doesn’t know how to fry an egg. The young wife today takes part in card tournaments, takes the first prize in pinochle, rummy and bridge but doesn’t know how to make a decent cup of coffee or tea. The young wife knows all the actors and actresses, is conversational about movies but does not know how to clean a pan or pot from fat. The young wife knows the intricacies of bowling and the execution of the fox trot, the tango and the big apple but hasn’t the slightest idea about making a good loaf of bread or pasty or the canning of fruits and vegetables. Please take this seriously not as being laughable. To the things mentioned above, I add a remedy. I am talking about contemporary wives because even some of the elderly women run around like a cat with a bladder problem. They go to theatres, dance halls, to parties in private houses and where else? There they spend long hours, because staying home is boing because there is nothing to do there. There is more disorder at home than in a hen house. The bed is unmade, the laundry is no washed, the floor is not swept, the windows are dirty, and cobwebs everywhere. The kitchen is cluttered with unwashed glasses which are half filled, dirty dinner plates. In the sink there are more unwashed utensils and glasses and cups. The lay there for days begging human love. The wives ask liberation from the tasks that would make the home in some state of organization. It is useless they have no time. Furthermore in such a home you will not find holy water at the entry, no crucifix, no prayer at the table; you will not find any kind of religious picture in the bedroom. That would not be in vogue. In this kind of home, the husband comes from work. He had toiled amid the roaring of machines with dust everywhere in the air and sweat on the brow, dust in the eyes and throat. A boss looked over his shoulder and glanced at him with suspicious eyes. It enervated the worker and disturbed him that when lunch time came he only drank a cup of coffee. He couldn’t take bread. He looked forward to coming home and having a decent meal and a well deserved rest. Instead he finds the home in disarray, no dinner prepared, the table not set, the children unclean and the wife napping, angry and in a bad mood. It is not wonder that at the sign of this purgatorial home the poor husband loses it and goes instead to place where glasses clink and shot glasses ring out, “We won’t go home until morning. And what is worse: The wives as if angry at that complain about their husbands or find relaxation outside of the home. What a situation in which a husband in a neglected him hurries to a saloon or tavern and then washes his brain with liquor and forget what married life is all about. Married nests become dens of vice. We wonder why children leave the nest seeking to create their own nest. Listen to the letter from Fall River, Mass. – “I admit that I was drunk. However it is not all my fault. When I married twenty years ago I thought I was the happiest man on earth. I had a good job and bought a small home from saved monies. The furniture was paid as go on. After one year, we lived in agreement. We paid off our debts. My wife began to neglect the house and me. Daily she ran to see her mother or her friends. Rarely did she prepare a proper meal. Everything was from cans. She didn’t even want to make coffee in the morning. She didn’t prepare a lunch at work because she didn’t feel like it. She gave me fifteen cents for a lunch. She preferred not to eat dinner with me. She had a dog and a cat. They were better taken care of than I was. In the next year God gave us a daughter. I thought that that would keep her at home and change her attitude. She travelled to friends and relatives praising her baby daughter and tells all how beautiful she was. I, the husband had to stay home, neglected and abandoned like an old broom. When coming home from the factory there was a plate with crackers and a pot with potatoes on the stove. I gave her my pay. She never was satisfied. She tolerated one package of cigarettes every week. She did not want to go out with me to church or on a visit. It was not once that I got angry. I explained the best way I could two times she left and went to her brother’s. I began to go out for dinner to restaurants and started to drink more than was good for my health. In December 1936 my daughter left home because she could no longer listen to our spats. She told her mother and my wife that she would never come back home even if she had to starve to death in New York. My wife then left me. She took everything with herself even the insurance policies from the Society. I found out that we were a thousand dollars in debt. Despondent, I start to drink more heavily. When I think to myself about what I once had, and what I have now, I feel insanity coming on. I worked hard and save, for whom?”

Now, you wives, listen to the advice given by a prominent Polish woman, who writes: “You need to know that every man is inordinately impressed with a good table, healthy and tasty: aromatic sauces, pastries, with good humor; on the other hand if the man marries and puts her on a pedestal and praises her attributes, I she happens to be unlike his idea of an ideal wife and becomes impractical and does not feed him well, in a short time he will lose interest in her. Even though he himself was not orderly and faulted himself though he criticized her, when he comes back to work. As he criticizes her day after day she becomes disenchanted. There are other material needs that the wife should be in touch with. The wardrobe, the laundry, that the clothes may be well washed, etc. It is spoken of Curie-Sklodowski the she sorted by hand her husband’s laundry, counted it, examined it, and if there was a button missing she replaced it. How will the husband respect the wife, when in other endeavors she is caring. A certain husband in advanced age, was asked where is he well taken care of. The reply: “There where my wife is.”

General Chlaposki’s wife, by reason of his upcoming marriage, gave this advice: “Happiness in marriage is due to love, enlightened through religion. That kind of love gives birth to trust, prevents jealousy, and contributes tolerance, which seeks perfection. If such love was to endure, a dedicated care must exist.” It is no wonder that she behaved as she advised. That is why she had these words imbedded in his tombstone, “She gave me advice for 36 years.” Could more of importance be written for a manly woman and a resourceful wife?

When I finished writing the above paragraph, one of our fathers came to visit us that someone is in the waiting room and complained that it is urgent that he see me. I dropped my pen and went. I look. There in the chair is a crying man. Despite the fact and a pay little attention to people who are crying, this man’s weeping brought out my sensitivity. I asked how I could help. Listen to this story because it is quite interesting. “I came to complain about my wife. We married two years ago, in this parish. Immediately after the vows, my wife began to act curiously. From morning to evening she was at her mother’s place. I went to work; she came a half hour before came from the factory. She hurriedly prepared the meal and off she went to the theater or to her friends. I could not go with her because I was at work. My work is energy sapping; I breathe a lot of dust and come home tired. I told her that I didn’t marry her because I needed a boarder nor visitor. She got so angry that she smashed some dishes on the table. What’s worse she began to come home drunk. Last week she forgot her house keys. At two in the morning she mashed a window with her hand and entered the house. I can’t take it anymore. I plan to leave and go to another city. I plan to go wherever my eyes take me and I do not care what happens to me.” - Considering the examples I have just mentioned, how do you regard these women-mothers and wives? Are they building or ruining?” Are they creating or destroying? Are they sources of happiness and peace, or the sources of failure, disagreement, and the eventual break-up of the family? As the mother so the family. What I the reason for the greater number of women in our times, lost from sight the goal of their existence and vocation? The most important reason is they have neglected the basis of the Christian faith; that same faith which established them with worn hands and lifted them from the mud of paganism and placed them beside the heart of man. That was not enough. She strived and wished some kind of irrational natural equality, which gave her freedom to go into factories and bureaus and took her to the sporting arenas and hazardous work places. It has taken her to places where angels fear to tread. Today a woman drinks like a veteran, smokes like a chimney and curses like a sailor. Nothing cramps her style. She cares not for any human concern. One cannot think of anything is missing in her life. I know that someone may say that it is only a passing fancy. Fine, but look at what that passing fancy is leaving for the future. The harm done to Christian ideals, broken homes, neglected children and wasted health – and a whole gamut of suffering and unhappiness. The contemporary women is like a butterfly in the fields; it flies peacefully and leads an empty, goal-less life. It is here and there and everywhere. Constantly occupied, but doing nothing, achieving nothing. Can we call this being a model housewife and caring mother? Or are they slayers of maternal happiness? Wives! Your men will carry you in their arms, and not only society will crown you with glory if you merit that glory. You will not earn all of this unless you will be coworkers and helpers to your men; unless you keep your home clean and orderly. Then the current generation will honor you and be proud of you.