FEBRUARY 6, 1938

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

Last Sunday, I tried to paint a disgusting picture of a drunkard, his senseless and self-destructive behavior, and his humbling and lowering end. I wanted to place in the hearts of our listeners a restraint from addiction that could ruin health, hinder good works, tear apart unity and peace, destroy family life, and undermine the social structure, spreads disease, deprivation and poverty. The drunkard is a Judas who is a traitor to God, to himself, his wife and his children. He is a vile and despicable Judas who for a glass and a bottle sells not only his own soul and body, but jeopardizes the bodies and souls and his loved ones, whom God commanded him to be responsible for those in his care, “Take these children and rear them for me. I will repay you!” What repayment? “Your repayment.” It means the reward that you earn. What would be the payment would the drunk addicted father receive? Namely, that father who instead of bringing his pay from work to the house, to give to his wife for bread and milk, for shoes for his children, for heating the house and for the rent – he drinks all of this and comes home with unsteady pace and wildly sparked eyes, cursing and giving a bad example. I ask once more: “what kind of reward can this addicted drunk, in justice expect. My good man, if at the moment hold a drink in your hand and raise it to your mouth, restrain yourself, for on the wall, beside your, some unseen hand are written some secret words. Your shameful verdict. Read it: “poverty, physical and moral infirmity, suffering, disease, death!” Do not be surprised, fear instead! Let that worry hold you back from further addiction. Your elderly mother prays for you; for this your God-fearing wife begs you; for this your innocent children whom you are neglecting pray to the Creator. All cry to God: “Father in Heaven, give us a sober father, who is responsible, caring, and loving. As the drunk displayed a dark and sad image, what about the wife and mother, who lose goodness through hatred and are ashamed. The sight of a drunken women, fills a person with distaste, with sadness and shame that she who ought to stand at the altar like a shining star of virtue and honor, lowers herself to the point of passing out. Unfortunately, the modern woman both old and young goes for stylishness; looks at life dressed in unreasoned behavior, one which is in imitation to manhood. She is bereft of the Christian woman’s virtue and covered with vices and man-like addictions. Listen to my descriptions in our talk entitled:

IS THIS A CHRISTIAN MOTHER?

History teaches us that in the times before Christ, the meaning of what it is to be a woman was not much. She served as a trifle, was looked upon as an entertainment; she was treated as a prisoner; she was treated as a being without reason, without benefit, and without any noble assets. Besides, one does not have to reach into pre-Christian times or seek into ancient history. It is sufficient to look as some of the pagan countries of our times. There the man is the Lord and the woman is cattle. They own her, buy and sell her for a few dollars, or trade here like sheep or goats. Christianity took the woman and lifted her from the street, from the way of the cross and not only made her equal to man but put her upon an altar. It made her a person of honor and glory. Only then did the world admit her nobility, vocation, dedication and sacrifice of every woman especially the wife and mother. She became of companion, a helper, a co-worker with the man. She was changed into the keeper of the hearth and the guardian angel of happiness for the household. Pagans were astounded and this transformation. They admired the Christian woman. St. John “Krzywousty” relates an account from his own life. Some Greek teacher “a prince of contemporary literati” but a pagan allied to the little gods of his forefathers, curious about the teachings of Christianity, asked about the family orientation of the Christian family. St. John told the pagan that he had his mother who was forty years old to thank and who was a widow now for twenty years. The pagan listened with disbelief. He could not understand such a brave spirit of a young Christian widow bearing all she had to do that was life demanding and sacrificial. He turned a gathered group and called out: “Now you know what kind of women these Christians have. And why did contemporary Christian have these kinds of women. The Christians held to and lived according to the apostle Paul who wrote, in a letter to Titus: “”The elderly woman, in holy attire are not slanderous, not drinking too much wine, well-educated teaching younger women good judgment, to love their husbands and their children, dedicated to their husbands, so the word of God be not blasphemed.” As long as the Christian women had the cross of Christ before their eyes, and kept the lesson of the cross in their minds, the enlightened humanity as a bright stars shining in the heavens. As soon as they begin to lose Christ they began to also lose their shining, their light. They began to adopt the pagan ways. In order to quiet the women the world opened the doors to equality, liberalism, and freedom which packed them deeper in the bogs. Today the woman lives under the banner which holds the words: “What is good for Adam is good for Eve.” Today the woman spokes, drinks, and swears as well, comparing herself to man. Today there are no girls. There are only boys. Today there are no women; there are Amazons. I aim in the not too distant future to touch on this in my talks. Today I will pain a few portraits for your eyes. Foreboding, dark portraits not boding well. Listen please. The letter comes from the state of Nebraska: “Father Justin: you always call children to honor their parents. God enough if the parents are good and care about their children. However if they are drunkards as is our mother, what then? How can you love your mother, who secretly buys vodka, gets drunk and sleeps in that state for hours leaving the children dirty and hungry. We have no father. He was killed in a car accident. I have two brothers who go to school. I am 18 years old. I have to work in a factory. When I come home in the evening, my mother lies drunk. She gets up in the night and walks around. She looks like she wants to kill us. I cannot sleep because I’m afraid what could happen. Once she took a big knife and threw it at me. Another time she grabbed me by the neck. The third time she opened the gas knobs. In the morning I go tearfully and sleeplessly to work. My work does not go well for me because I think about what my mother is doing at home. What’s worse is that our neighbor comes and drinks with my mother. I never thought that my mother would be addicted to alcohol. Would I do wrong if I sent my mother to the hospital? Would it be better that I leave home and go with non-family members so that I would not have to look upon a swearing, drunken mother. I loathe her. It is unfortunate that my father was killed. Perhaps to would have been better if he lived. I ask for your prayers for us and for our mother so that she would stop drinking.” I ask: What kind of mother is this? Does she even merit to be called by the name, “mother?”

Another letter is from the state of Missouri: “Reverend Father: Our father divorced our mother because she drank a lot. He left us and went his way. That was three years ago. Since then, my brother and sister went their way because they couldn’t stand it at home. I remained alone with my mother but I don’t know if I will be able to stand it for long. I can’t say that she always drinks but when she does she drinks until she loses consciousness. This happens at least twice a month. Then you can’t help her; she wants to beat me; she calls me names and curses. She says that it’s all my fault. Dear Father, I work hard at the butcher shop. I rise early at five. I come home at three. Sometimes I am so tired that I can hardly stand on my feet. I do not go to the movies or to any dances. I would love to take my mother under my care and go for a walk with her. I would want to show my mother to the neighbors. We are not poor, thank God because I have a good paying job and I am healthy. However this doesn’t make me feel good because my mother has to get drunk. This morning when I rose, she already was drunk. I didn’t say a word. I took a glass of milk and fixed my lunch. I didn’t even kiss my mother on the forehead and I began to cry worriedly. When I returned home from work she was more drunk than when I left her in the morning. I had to pick her up. She began to bad mouth me and argued with me. I was so flustered that I became numb. I lost my strength. I called the doctor, because I couldn’t help myself. She rose often and then fell into bed. The doctor came and gave her a sedative so she could sleep. At this moment she sleeps. I will have a bit of peace even though I stay up all night worrying so she doesn’t hurt herself. Father, if only you could see her. She has black marks on her forehead and black bags under her eyes. “It sure was disgusting every time I looked at my mother!” Mom slept through the night. She behaved even though she threw herself from side to side in bed. Today she is ill and shakes like a leaf. I feel as if I had returned from a war. My hands and chest hurt from lifting and lugging my mother. She looks terrible; she would not fare well without me. However I was sad and ashamed. One of our relatives came in the evening, but I would not let him in; I shut the lights and pulled down the shades, because I didn’t want him to see her in that sad drunken state. Now I really don’t know what I should do? Take her to the hospital? My relatives and acquaintances would crucify me. Leave home and support myself? I could survive but what would happen to my mother? She is so wiped out and weak. On the other hand, I find it intolerable to look at her in drunken state? Forgive me Father; I am worn out from crying and being ashamed.”

The third letter is from Pennsylvania. “There is not another family in this world that is as unhappy as we are. The reason for this unhappy situation is our mother who currently is 67 year old. During the years of prohibition we lived with people who made moonshine in their cellar. They secretly gave my mother moonshine. She became addicted. Once a week she imbibes. There are three of us at home. We all work but for what? When she is sober, there couldn’t be a better mother; however, when she drinks, there couldn’t be a worse mother. When we take the bottle away from her, she curses and wants to beat us. Yesterday she grabbed a hot pan from the stove and wanted to hit my sister who was frying bacon. Luckily I hit her hand and she dropped the pan. She shouted that God would punish me because I raised my hand to her. My theater does not have a good life in this family but for him it is hell. We want to live peacefully but with a drunken mother, it is impossible. We want to respect her but can’t when she’s drinking. I wish those people, who made my mother a drunkard with their moonshine, the deepest hell. It is they who brought all this suffering upon us.

The fourth letter is from Michigan: “Our daughter is engaged. She is twenty five years old and has two children, a five year old son and a four year old daughter. At least three times a week she frequented a tavern to dance and drink all night long. Her husband works at night. She comes home drunk around four or five o’clock in the morning. She bangs on the door for her little children to open the door for her. Sometimes she calls loudly to wake to up so they would open the door for her. Father, you haven’t the slightest idea how young wives behave. They drink through the night. One can’t criticize them because they curse at you without mercy. They leave their children with their mothers, or put to sleep. They lock to doors and frequent tavern after tavern. Later they need to visit a doctor or go to a hospital. I have been brought up the old fashioned way. I am not surprised that there are so many divorces these days. Sometimes the husband just abandons the home. If the wife and mother does not want to keep house but wants to spend nights at taverns drinking and dancing then she should expect no regard from others. And this holds not only for young wives but for the elderly also. Even those who were born in the old country. Now, are these mothers?!

The fifth letter is from Illinois. It was written by a detective: Fr. Justin, would you please devote a talk to our daughters, wives and mothers so they would remember not to toy with alcohol. It is my responsibility to keep the order where they hold various entertainments. Many kinds of people come. It disturbs me to tears to see our Polish ladies drink themselves unconscious. It lasts for hours. Some things that happen I wish not to write about since the paper I write upon would flame up. I have a wife and two grown up daughters. I cannot understand why our Polish women cannot resist the drinking when they can’t hold on to the glass. Do their family members not see where and when they are spending long hours and who they are with and how they spend their time. There are times when I have to take an unconscious woman to the car. Once they get used to the lifestyle it’s almost impossible to get out of it. People of other nationalities don’t know that I am a Pole myself and laugh at these women who go through such excesses. They use vodka which kills any emotional composure or sensibility they could have. I have to look at that night after night. You priests should remind our young and older Polish women not to sell their respect and honor for a bottle of vodka or champagne.

In the last months of the prohibition, a young lady came to me to complain about her mother. She told me the sad story while shedding large tears running down her cheeks. She related the sad story. Her father was a saloon keeper. He drank heavily. He drank his health away and got his wife to drink. Her father was buried a few months ago. They can’t help the wife; she drinks her days away. She goes out for the night and comes home in the morning. Where she was, what she did was impossible to learn. I heard the story, took my habit and my cane and went off to visit. It was nine o’clock on a dreary cold winter day. I enter the home of the drunken Pole. It was cold empty and dark as a stable. The young girl takes me to the bedroom. She puts on the lights. I look and I myself turned cold as ice. On soiled bed sheets laid the drunken woman in a dress and slippers with hair disheveled, red faced and emaciated. She murmurs and complains. At the bedside is a quart bottle of liquor. The air in the room is stale. I took the bottle and smelled it. She woke up. Suddenly she bounded out of bed but fell on her unsteady feet. I stand and watch. I wait. She started mumbling something but I couldn’t understand it. She looked at me with a lamb’s eye. I asked them to call the family doctor. I told him the situation and the daughter signed the necessary documentation. The ambulance arrived. They took her to the city hospital. It seems to me that she was rehabilitating there for three months. The healing lasted three months and one could not find more sober women in all of Buffalo. This is what you should do my children to take care of the excessive drinkers. You will need patience and do something about such a situation where the mother or wife prefers the bottle instead of health and peace. Explain to them the effects of alcohol on the body and mind. They lose their respect and become the laughing stock of others. When advice, love and persuasion do not work, mother should go into the hospital for rehab and not only for a few days but for a longer period of time. Not only is it befitting of you to help in this way; it is truly a sign of real understanding and practical mercy because you are saving her health, the health of body and soul. You keep her from the insane asylum, from the grave, and from hell. Otherwise, I repeat again that on the ship of alcoholism, she will be wasted, poor, and alone. They will bury her in a grave smelling of alcohol and God will take the soul of the drunken mother and put her somewhere in the depths of hell. You, however, mothers, who up till now knelt piously before your glasses and bottles, awaken, shed yourself of this wicked which lowers you in the esteem of you fellow human beings, shames your children, and summons the justice of God. Remember that your children, even those grown up, and those who have left your nest are proud of you decision to rid yourself of the bad habit. So much heartfelt mercy, so much honorable pride comes with the words: “This is the way mother taught us; this is the way mother lived; this is the way mother behaved. See when on Sunday how we hurried to Church. How many times do you see the children grown up lead and support the old mother; see in our families, when at holiday times they come from near and far the children come to their mother. To a mother who is good, caring and sober! Take a ride to the cemetery. There on the grave of the mother, kneel a group of grown up children of the mother. And today, even though it is twenty, thirty. or forty years from the time she died, the children shed their tears. Why? Because she was a good, caring mother. Dear Mothers, sometimes you look at your role as a mother, at the thankless job you have and the sacrifices you make. I call on you, dearest Mothers in the words of St Augustine: “You say: the times are bad, the times are hard, the times are unhappy! Let your life be good, and living well you will, in that manner, change the times and you won’t have the opportunity to complain!” Then every son and every daughter will publicly and proudly say of you mother: “Father, my mother is the best in this world. There is no other like her and I wouldn’t trade her for any other. You will merit yourself that label, if your life a Christian life, restrained from excesses, sober. Mothers, may God help you in all and Bless You!