**February 21, 1932**

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

A few days ago I received a letter with the following contents:

Chicago, Il.

Feb15, 1932

Reverend Dear Father,

I am in despair. I ran away from home a few years ago, because the family was large and my parents would not allow me to do and to have all that I wanted. Upon my girl friend’s suggestion I left all and went to different places, was married in the court with and Italian, who was married already, but when I found out that he was a married man I took a divorce, later I became acquainted with a certain American who lodged me in a furnished apartment two months ago and he disappeared. Now, deserted by all, miserable and helpless, I cry day and night and bought myself a bottle of poison to end this misery. Weeping I write to you, Rev. Father asking whether there is no help for me. I will listen over the radio Sunday, February 21 and it may be the last day of my life, for I am ready to do anything and am carrying the bottle of poison with me.

Signed I. S. from Chicago

The second letter reads as follows:

East Chicago, Ind

February 9, 1932

Reverend Father,

I am a Pole and a Catholic. I have a bad husband, very corrupt and immoral. For the past four years I was suffering and struggling hard, but now I am already powerless. I cannot defend myself, for I feel my strength declining. I have a bottle of poison prepared, and greatly confused am waiting for an answer from you, for life with such a husband is unbearable.

Signed L. C. from Chicago

These two sad letters compelled me, my dear radio listeners, to change the intended topic of today’s speech to make more lengthy answers to these poor victims, one to the woman, who deserted her parents and home, to live independently and at ease, fell into despair and may end her life by suicide, and the other, to an unhappy wife and mother. Praying to God that today’s speech, I could prevent these two women from committing suicide.

**A Frustrated Suicide**

A police patrol wagon, stopped at the gate of a Polish hospital at 9 o’clock in the evening. The policemen carried into the operation room a young, unconscious girl, dressed elegantly. The doctor in charge, as well as the Mother Superior came in quickly. After a hurried examination, the doctor said briefly, “Laudanum poisoning”. Immediately the doctor began to pump out the poison and shake the unconscious girl. After a short while the girl regained consciousness. “What is to be done now”, asked the Mother Superior, “we cannot permit her to fall asleep, she must remain awake until six o’clock.” If she does fall asleep, she will no more see light. The Mother Superior looked troubled and said, “Doctor, all the sisters are engaged, where will I get any help? I am too old and too weak.” In answer to this, the doctor merely shrugged his shoulders. Suddenly a voice at the door was heard saying, “Mother Superior, I will willingly take care of the unfortunate girl. It was the voice of Sister Mary Agnes. “But Sister” said Mother Superior, “you worked the whole day and need rest.” The doctor glanced at the emaciated figure, and the pale lean face of the nun. “No,” said the doctor decidedly and firmly, “Sister you must take a rest.” “Allow me, however, Mother Superior, to try and with God’s help, I may be able to save the girl. Please give her to my care, she needs me.” “Well said”, answered the doctor impatiently, “take the whole responsibility upon yourself but I fear that there will be two dead instead of one.” And so the poor nun sacrificed herself to sty up the whole night and watch the unfortunate patient, who made an attempt on her own life. Without any reflection, Sister Agnes took the semi-conscious girl under the arms, and made her walk up and down the long and wide corridors. The girl could hardly stand the knees were bending under her. And her head was turning to and fro. Still Sister Agnes watched and walked down the corridors with her, it seemed to her that she herself walked on thorns and briars nevertheless exerting her utmost power she supported and dragged the semi-conscious patient. At last the girl stopped and said, “You cannot, my child,” answered the nun, “if you will stop walking and go to sleep, death is certain.” “What of it,” whispered the weary girl,”I want to die, that’s why I drank the poison. I don’t care to live any longer. The people took away all I had, the world has no pity upon me, all have deserted me, I do not want to live, and I want to die and the sooner the better.” Quietly and sorrowfully Sister Agnes answered, “You should have not done it, God gave your life, therefore you are forbidden to take it away. You are very young, and the world is beautiful. True that people are wicked and perverse, but notwithstanding past suffering, you should not doubt, nor despair. Why do you want to die?” Slowly the girl was regaining conscious, and spoke as if to say to herself, “I hate all the people, and curse the world, and for that reason I took poison for I wanted to put an end to all. Why oh why did I not listen to my father’s warnings and my mother’s entreaties.” Saying this, she wept bitterly. It was midnight. The girl felt sleepy and weariness could be seen on the face of the nun. Both were silent. The clock struck one two, then three, and still both kept on walking. The nun began to say the rosary. The girl, raised her head and said harshly and angrily, “I do not want you to pray, Sister, I do not believe in God or prayer anymore, because heaven and earth have forsaken me.” “And still, my child, God was so good to you. Do you not want to belong to God anymore?” “No, I do not want to, for why should I? If God were just, He would not allow all to disregard me.” “Do not blaspheme, dear child. Aren’t you living? Aren’t you saved from death? You murmur against God, and did you show justice to yourself by taking poison? God suffered for you, God died for you on the cross, and you dare to reproach God that He has forsaken you.” The girl gradually was regaining consciousness. The nun was tired, and felt her strength declining. The clock was striking six. At the same moment the doctor came in, and after a short examination said, Sister, you saved the patient’s life. The girl burst into tears and began to kiss the nun’s hands. “Promise me, begged the nun, “that you will visit me soon, and we shall have a little conversation.” The girl promised and went back into the world. The nun was tired and weak and went to her cell. She lay down to sleep, which was the beginning f a prolonged and severe illness. After a few months she left her bed, still she was troubled by a repeated dry cough, which did not predict good result. She thought often of the girl, who was tired of living and took poison. How often did she pray for her intention and her conversion? Will she keep her promise, or not? If God will grant that she come, I shall speak to her kindly, and probably her heart will be moved and she will cry again, perhaps she may in the end be reconciled with God, and be prevailed upon to give up[ the life she was leading. Poor and unfortunate creature, perhaps I will be able with God’s help to speak to her, and ask her to go to confession, and then to her home, to her father and mother. One should not cease praying . O, you poor nun, the merciful God will hear your prayers, but with what sacrifice?

Two weeks elapsed. The day was cold, clear and bright. The ground was covered with snow. Crowds of people were hurrying to the hospital. The doors of the hospital chapel are opened wide. The guests assemble there. A tall young and elegantly dressed girl comes to the hospital door, and asks, “May I see Sister Agnes? Perhaps she is still sick? No, answers the nun, tenderly follow me and I will take you to her.” Slowly through the long corridors both came to the chapel decorated with mourning-cloth. In front of the altar-railing a modest coffin, surrounded by large candles, stood the girl. The nun came near the coffin and said sorrowfully, ”Sister Agnes died the day before. Before she died, she asked for one, who dissatisfied with life, took poison.” The girl began to cry bitterly. She gazed steadfastly upon the white face of the dead martyr, the pale forehead, hollow cheeks, narrow lips, and the numb hands grasping a rosary. It seemed to her, that her own heart stopped beating, and she felt remorse of conscience, she wept bitterly and the echoes of her groans filled the chapel. The gathered guests, not knowing the reason, cried with the well dressed girl. After the funeral services, all left the chapel. The girl remained kneeling in the last pew. An old priest, seeing her weeping bitterly, came up to her and asked why she didn’t leave with the others. In answer to this question she whispered something into his ear. The priest nodded his head and walked into the confessional. Her confession lasted long. With tears and unceasing weeping she confessed her faults and sins. In heaven, without doubt, the angels were glad, for ”there shall be joy in heaven upon one sinner that doth penance, more than upon ninety nine just who need not penance”….After so many downfalls, the black sheep returned weeping and with sorrow in her heart to the home of her Heavenly Father, and to her parents. She led a happy and peaceful life. Few years ago, she died in an automobile accident.

Now I return to the letter. You frankly confess that you have left not only the home of your parents, but also the home of your heavenly Father. God did not forget you, but you have forgotten Him. There is help for you. Make an act of humiliation. Do as the prodigal son did. Listen to what Our Lord said in the Gospel of St. Luke, chapter 15. “A certain man had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father. Father, give me the portion of substance that falls to me. And he divided unto them his substance. And not many days after, the younger son, gathering all together, went abroad into a far country: and there wasted his substance, living riotously. And after he had spent all, there came a mighty famine in that country; and he began to be in want. And he went and cleaved to one of the citizens of that country. And he sent him into his farm to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with husks the swine did eat; and no man gave it to him. And returning to himself, he said: How many hired servants in my father’s house abound with bread, and I here perish with hunger? I will rise, and will go to my father, and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before you: I am not worthy to be called your son: make me as one of your hired servants. And rising up he came to his father. And when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and was moved with compassion, and running to him fell upon his neck, and kissed him. And the son said to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, I am not now worthy to be called your son. And the father said to his servants: Bring forth quickly the first robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: And bring the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat and make merry: Because this my son was dead, and is come to life again: was lost and is found. Do the same and you will be received not only by your Heavenly Father but also your earthly father.

Discontinue the thought about poison and suicide. God gave the commandments to the people, on Mount Sinai, amidst lightning and thunder. Read the fifth commandment: You shall not kill, you shall not kill.” Out with poison, do not even think of committing suicide; fall on your knees, strike your breast and with a contrite heart say: “Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before You.”

Our life is a gift of God. It is a gift, for which we shall be obliged to answer to God on judgment day. Only insane and godless people commit suicide, only those in whose heart there is lack of religion, lack of faith in the immortality of the soul, and life beyond the grave, lack of confidence in God’s mercy. Those who have betrayed God and their neighbor, with life unworthy of a well thinking man, try to quiet their conscience and boldly show their contempt for God, take their lives illegally. God is our Master, and Master of ever thing we posses. Only God alone has the right to recall us to Himself any time He wishes. History teaches us that even pagans condemned suicide as an act of degradation and infamy. The pagans used to cut off the hand of the murderer and bury it apart from the body. And to us Christians the Apostle of the Nations calls in the First Letter to the Corinthians: “Do you not know that your body is a temple 8 of the holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?”

Finally I ask, whether the taking of one’s life brings to the self-murderer anything good? Will it end his sufferings? The self-murderer changes his temporal sufferings and misery for everlasting misery.

The famous Father Overberg, rector of the seminary at Muster, Westphalia, took a walk outside of the city. He noticed a middle aged man, who with a gloomy look gazed at the passerby, showing signs of enervation and excitement. Father Overberg, a competent judge of human nature, stopped and observed the suspicious man. Then he approached him and spoke a few words. But the latter answered harshly and impertinently: “Mind your own business.” This did not discourage the priest, who asked him the reason of his behavior. At last the stranger cried: “Leave me alone; I am tired of life; it is time to end it. I intend to commit suicide.” The priest gave him a brief question: “Will that help you?” These words had great influence on the would be criminal. The priest continued. He listened. He went with Father Overberg, made a confession of his sins and began a new life.

Concluding, I ask the discouraged lady of Chicago: “Will suicide do you any good? I also ask all my radio listeners this same question. The return to God and to faith, and return to a Christian life will teach us love, patience and confidence. With God’s help and blessing we will emerge victorious from behind the dark and ill foreboding clouds of misfortune, discouragement and despair. I merely ask every one of my radio audience to pray with me.

Oh God, our refuge and comfort in all our sufferings, oppressions and mysteries, I humbly implore You to keep me with the aid of Your divine grace on the right path on which I am constantly falling, due to my weakness and infirmity. I know my Lord, that it is better to suffer on this earth than to abound in its delights; that if I patiently bear my trials I can obtain remission of my sins and merit heaven, and in this way resemble our Savior, whose whole life was penance and suffering. I know that by patience I only multiply my sufferings, therefore, my merciful God, I beseech You, fortify and strengthen me to bear patiently all my afflictions that You send upon me, and that I may remember the heavenly reward that You promise to those, who meekly bear their temporary trials. O Christ, be my help. I give myself up entirely to You. I want to bear patiently all my crosses for the love of You. Guard and guide me till my last breath. Amen.