February 21, 1943

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

I have the impression that many of our listeners knew our Franciscan Fr. Hyacinth Fudzinski. Others have probably heard of him. Not only was he the founder of our Polish Province but our long time provincial as well. He was a noted and insightful religious, a pious priest, and a dedicated American citizen. And he also was a serious independent person. I had the privilege to have him as my superior, and although he was similar in temperament to a soldier, I benefited much from him in those years. In his elderly years, he would visit me in my room for talk. That is, he always talked, and I listened. He gave me pointers about living which I ultimately benefited from. Among other things, he repeatedly reminded me, that one should honor his or her parents and always love children: advice which I had already heard from my father at home. I remember well tipping my hat before a old person and saying..."Praised be..." And about loving children: When God took my mother to himself, who took care and fed little Joseph. I did. And when we complained, Dad gave little Joseph to Babci for care. But there were a lot of children in our house - it was never empty. But since I was the eldest, I took the role of teacher, counselor, and protector. It was a no-no to do wrong to anyone in the family. The parents took care of that problem. Dad had a kind of a look that prevented us from continuing any uncomplimentary activity. He took care of all the behavior problems. There always was a talk and a word of caution. He generally forgave the first and second misbehaviors. The third demanded a bit of pain for the inattentive listener. It was a growing experience. But I never stopped loving children. Even today I am fond of a little Polish lad who takes me back in time to my youth to my little Pennsylvanian home.

 CHILDREN

Anthony Cwojdzinanski in his weekly publication, "A circle of Polish Writers" contributes the story, "Children". "The impending war did not interest Francis. A man in his seventies does not occupy himself with trifles. What interested him was the liver, which he had to be careful of - and a few antics and a few costly items from the past. But - truly authentic and of worth instead of trifles. But he loved his things of which he found great worth from his past, like an artist would his own work.

After all, why not love that heavy table from the fifteenth century which had crooked legs carved in the gothic style or that group of children around a dish of potatoes by a Dutch master from the seventeenth century. He knew every detail and the old tapestry and the red glow on the children's cheeks, the facial expressions of one and the laugh of another, and the closed look of another in the wide open eyes of another. He stood before this art often. Why? he didn't no himself because in his old age, he understood less and less. Often he forgot what he was thinking of. The heart's working and the dizziness contributed to his elder years.

He also had less and less contact with people. They didn't mean that much to him, but not too long ago - ten or fifteen years ago, he met two persons he had known from his past. With every year he became reclusive more and more. He had to give up coffee. And he sometimes went to the coffee shop for a biscuit.

Sometimes a neighbor would try to start a conversation, but Francis came forth with a "good day" and continued on up his stairs to the top floor. He wasn't about to start a relationship. In theory he was always a democrat, but he never forgot that he was positioned on a higher floor than his neighbor. He could live in a plush apartment but he was not going to give up his glorious antiques. He could withdraw some of his monies from the bank if he wished - that was a choice. But why? It would only facilitate his meeting with others. One person with whom from time to time was the wife of the maintenance man of the apartment complex. But that broke up. She came with your son, eleven year old Stanley and although the lad was quiet and didn't disturb the peace but just stood quietly and sometimes helped his mother with something, the old man was just irritated. One time the wife asked him for the rent ahead of the due time, because her husband was going into the army and it freed her from service. It ended up without a "hello" on the stairs. The old man was in his little desert but he didn't mind.

No wonder that no one ever thought of him when the war began. He was seen going to the coffee house when his biscuits ran out but there was always bread.

In the meantime life took on new forms. The people huddled in the cellar, became a community. When the maintenance man's wife went to the wagon for bread, her son fetched water, the manager picked wood for the fire for the stove, the type setter searched for potatoes or horse meat. Somehow life had to be sustained in these extreme circumstances. It is then that the people began to think of the old man.

Although this man was not interested in anything that was going on, he had to be saved - the manager of the apartments decides to help and went to him with her son. In the room as everywhere there wasn't a pane of glass in the windows, the broken plaster dropped from the walls, and from the windows one could see the black smoke of the ruins. The old man was not interested. He sat before the Dutch master and gazed at the children's faces. He refused to go downstairs because he didn't want to leave his precious antiques. No one could break through his stubbornness. They tried to help him move his antiques and no one could move the heavy table.

Help came from a bomb. He found himself on the lowest floor and they helped him to get to the cellar where everyone was huddled. The bomb destroyed the man's house. But the cellar was not harmed. The settle the old man and even brought in his old table even though it was worthless for it lost its legs. He sat in the middle of the ruins with his painting, clutching a piece of bread given to him by the lady. He thought about the hour - two, three, four, and the children, who were frightened of him before, came to him. When Stanley went for water and Marcinowa for bread, the children started to play and a young one wanted to sit in his lap. He didn't show that he was annoyed but he made believe that he didn't see them. He wanted to look at the children in the Dutch master's painting but the darkness of the cellar did not permit it. He neared the broken table legs, wishing that at least one of them would be intact. All of them were ruined. They were made into a cross and hid. A plane strafed and broke her journey for bread. Francis was at the burial. He had to help Stanley, for the children were all crying. Two of them were holding his leg and he had to take one in his hands. He sat with them and prayed. Stanley suggested that they get back to the shelter because the bombing had begun again.

Then, when the Germans were in Warsaw, it happened that Stanley took the role of leader and began directing. He took on the role of mother. He went for bread, cooked in the kitchen, made soup with the potatoes. The old man had to cut the children from the painting because he was afraid that the Germans would take his precious antiques. The real children began to look like the children in the painting. He started talking to the real children. He prayed. He even began to relate fables. He needed some help with the fables and the children helped him out and began to fall asleep to the narrative. When the Germans began to confiscate the works of art, he thought they would take his painting and so he folded it in quarters and put it in his pocket. However, he admitted to himself that it didn't hurt as much he thought it would. The painting did not please him as it did before. The smile of the boy in the painting didn't have its prior life and the eyes were not the eyes of a child. Month by month the time passed and the people suffered for it became more and more difficult but Francis became younger all the time. He had long talks with his neighbors and took the children for walks and taught them lessons which the fables illustrated. He passed through literature and history of Poland, then writing, then reading and mathematics. After a while the neighbors would send their children. Francis had no time for himself but what could he do because the things that he forgot about proved to be a treasure when the Germans closed the schools. What could he do? Mouths opened at the listening and the eyes had sparks in them when he narrated history. Francis had seen many art shows in his life but he never had seen such children in any painting that he had seen in the Warsaw shelter. The Dutch master had no idea of the warmth, the smile, the tears and the real life in true children. There was not enough time to teach Stanley. He was involved in everything and was in charge of everything. He even yelled at Francis, after all, Stanley had just learned to speak. However he had to agree that Stanley made sense. The ring that was sold for less than it was worth. Stanley would have gotten three times its worth. And he did indeed get more and then went the chain to the watch. And the Watch gave two months of living. From that time he didn't allow himself for any disobedience. And it happened that Stanley was not home for longer periods of time. He came home later and later in the evening. Francis never asked him about it .

Stanley brought things that one could not find for any money. One time Stanley had some heavy things to carry and the old man offered him his help. He was weak, true. Stanley gave him a surly look. I promised myself that I wouldn't tell anyone where I was going. Secondly the education of the children is important, or even more important. So Francis stayed with the children, and although he was worried about their food and clothing, for they were in rags and he could not withdraw and he couldn't get any money from his painting because it was ruined in his pocket - he was the happiest he ever was in his past life. He felt that at last he was worth something. Once when coming back from a long walk in the alleys, he saw something that tugged on his heart. Stanley was loaded with items stood between two Germans. One of them held Stanley by the collar. and another in civilian clothes, having a swastika around his arm, grabbed him by the shirt. The boy thought it was the end but he didn't lose his compose. When he saw Francis, he gave him cautious look. which Francis recognized immediately. Don't show that you know me! He pushed the children forward and found himself in the midst of the Germans. He didn't know how it happened - but hit, with his long bony hand, with all his might, into the face of the civilian Nazi. When the Nazi reached for his revolver Francis hit him so hard that his hat fell off his head. In the commotion Stanley found himself on the other side of the street. When Francis lay on the ground he knew that a bullet had penetrated the Dutch Master's painting which was folded in his pocket. But it didn't sadden him. He saw the thin legs of Stanley. He sensed the warm blood on his cheek. For the first time in his life, he was truly happy. He had saved a boy's life by giving his life.

A now another life happening...an American story, written by Winifred Kosterman" "In the thirty years of my marriage I became the mother of sixteen children and don't have a single grey hair. Fifteen of my children are alive; they are all as charming and brilliant as you can find. They are all healthy. None of them have any unusual family problems. My nine daughters and 6 sons are popular and achieved athletic and scholastic awards. My older children all have good work, four are successfully married. They all go regularly to Church. Only my eldest smokes; none of them drink.

This year when Tomek, the youngest, kissed me and rushed away to school, I stood by the window and cried out loud. I married when I was 18 years old and through 29 years we always had a child in the house. And now my last child grew up and remained - alone. I encountered the desert in life. I would have given up everything, even my very self, my new refrigerator which my children bought me if I could have one more child. I don't pretend that I was wholly satisfied in every minute of my married life. There were times when I felt very tired and lacked ambition; there were days when the wolf had an eye our doorway; the I felt that children weren't that much of a blessing, as the poets maintain! I remember distinctly telling the doctor that the 14th child is on the way. It was 1931. Times were tough. The doctor was cheering me up. He said, "The woman who rocks a cradle, rocks the whole world." I bit my tongue and replied: "Well, I would rather that you ruled the world for a while. I am tired." Being very tired I went home to prepare dinner. I found the house filled with flowers, which the children picked outdoors. The older daughters were preparing dinner. The laundry was hanging after being washed. The older children felt the news, and so they ran over to me and started to kiss me. I put out my alms to hug them. In the meantime tears flowed from my eyes. I sincerely was ashamed that I doubted that I should not have wished to have them all. My husband and I grew up in Iowa. He was a successful farmer and was one of 12 children. We both wished to have a large family. We didn't even think of birth control; we both loved children. If I knew that I would have 16 children I probably would have lived as a old maid. Married love grows exponentially as do the number of children. I don't mean to recommend that wives should have large families. We are convinced, however, that if you have two children, you easily can permit yourself a third! If you have n, there is no problem with a tenth.

For healthy wives who are afraid of birthing I say, "Be not afraid. It's like jumping into cold water, after a while, it's wonderful. A few times I prepared supper, washed the dishes, put the children to bed, and in the morning bore a child. Twice when the roads were covered with snow and flooded, despite the weather the child was born. The more children I had, the healthier I was. I really was rarely sick. Ordinarily my husband and I would go into town for recreation. This may sound funny, but we feel young. We lived on the farm for eighteen years. We worked hard. We were poor, we didn't have money but we had good health. We had plenty to eat and we survived the depression without worry. Now and then we went to the movies. More often we spent our evenings by the piano. I played. The whole family sang. If, during the day, the children argues or some misunderstanding occurred between my husband and myself, choral singing cleared the air. When the depression came, we could not make a living on the farm so we went to the city of Le Mars. My husband worked a insurance agency with some side jobs. The eldest son, after school, worked in the store. Two daughters worked in private homes. There were times when we saw the bottom of the barrel. One day, our six year old daughter was hit by a car when she was coming home. The doctor said she had a concussion. Nothing could b e done. Waiting. Maybe she'll survive, maybe not. She was unconscious and had a fever when my husband held himself on his side and groaned, "I don't know but I have a severe pain in my right side. The doctor called for an ambulance and had an operation. And I, I was near having a baby. My oldest son was 17 and my two daughters came to our aid. They watched their sick sister who regained consciousness. I went to the hospital to see my sick husband. I had no money. My husband had none either. My husband's salary of 60 dollars had not come in yet. "Go to the bank and get a loan," my husband advised. The next day, early in the morning I went to the bank. I had a small container. In it I had two marriage rings and a gold watch. I got ready for a trade. I was very fearful because this is the first time I applied for a loan. "How much do you want" asked the president of the bank. We need food. I tried to look resourceful. I decided to ask for a large sum. I said, "Could you loan me ten dollars?" He smiled and gave me the ten dollars without any collateral. The boys helped by selling newspapers. When the times got better, my husband went to work in California. In a short time two daughters left. Currently there are 21 people in the family because of grandchildren and I am alone. Normally we get together on Sundays. We celebrate Christmas together and get together for Birthdays. Up till now I baked 247 Birthday cakes. For dinner we need two turkeys, one ham, six pies and torts and 5 quarts of ice cream. I buy the food wholesale. In a family of 17 people, no one strives to be the boss. On the other hand, no one could be boss. The children are happy that they belong to such a numerous family. They have more joy; they teach each other; they don't feel lonely; Give and take and be nice. When I want to think what I did for the children, I ask myself what did they do for me. I wish I had a dozen more; at least one more!