February 24, 1946

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

As an introduction to this talk, I am using excerpts from a letter sent me from a soldier, who still maintains order the German Reich. Please listen: “I was married in 1938. When America entered the war, I was taken into the army. I didn’t have any furlough at all. I asked that my wife be permitted to visit me for a couple days. She didn’t like the idea and talked me out of a visit. I was sent overseas. My wife wrote to me but not that often. I was disturbed at that, even though she excused herself because of the fact that she had to work to help out with the war effort. Her sporadic letters lasted a year and then nothing. Finally, I received a letter from my brother who wrote to me that she met a man at work and a couple times a week she would go out with him to a road house, for entertainment. When reprimanded by my family that she was not acting properly she replied with anger that she had alienated herself from me and from her own family. She said that she was happy with how she was living. She now was living with the man she met at work. I am troubled by all of this and ask what I should do. I was married in Church and I am Catholic as she is also. I am 28 years old. Her unfaithfulness has alienated me from her and broken any bond of love that I had. Can I, receive her back because I, in hunger and cold, fought on several fronts and roamed forgotten while she romanced and entertained herself with this traitor. What does the Church regulate on this matter? Will I be able to be married in church again? Please help. I don’t want to go against church law; I was wounded emotionally over her traitorous behavior and I am thankful to God for preserving me from death in the war?” – So much from the letter sent me. Now to my talk under the title:

THE NATIONAL ULCER

The Catholic Church forbids divorce. You may ask, “Why?” The answer is short and clear. Because Christ forbids it. And since the Church is an institution founded by Christ whose duty is to carry out Christ’s teaching, it cannot go against the instruction of Christ the Founder and teacher. In order to show the distinction between divorce and a judgment given for a separation I will use the word divorce as is practiced by non-Catholics, namely, that divorce is a complete breaking of marital ties, which give both partners the right to tie a new knot.

That the Savior clearly banned divorce is maintained in the gospels and by the Apostle of the nations. Let’s see how, where and on what occasion. The Savior, according to St. Matthew, finished his missionary work in Galilee and crossed the Jordan to Jewish land. Crowds, whom he taught and followed him and worked miracles for them. A group of jealous and tricky Pharisees also followed him and listened to his teaching. One of them asked Christ this question: “Is it possible for any reason to leave one’s wife? The Savior peacefully replied: “Have you not read that God created them man and woman?” Christ in these words wanted to say: If God wanted one man to have many women he would not have created only one woman, but many. And the same holds for man. And he said: “It is for this reason that man leaves his father and mother and takes on a wife and the two shall be one flesh. And so they are two but one flesh. What God has put together let no man divide.” Obviously God united them with a permanent knot for life.” At these words the Pharisee replied: “Then why did Moses dispense from it?” – Christ replied: “Moses granted a bill of divorce because of the hardness of your hearts but in the beginning it was not so.” I say to you: “Whoever leaves his wife, (except in cases where the marriage was illegal in the first place) commits adultery; and whoever marries a woman who was married commits adultery.” From this last statement, many, not only non-Catholics but even Catholics maintain that if the wife was adulterous the husband may leave her and even remarry. But that is erroneous since the Savior teaches clearly that who takes on such a woman is adulterous. That is true when the marriage carries on even when the man left his wife from the reason of her unfaithfulness. Therefore the sense of Christ’s words to the Pharisees is such: In the case of adultery, the husband may leave his wife and similarly the wife may leave her husband. But the husband of another wife or the wife of another husband cannot as long as the first lives. St. Mark confirms this when he writes: “And He said to them: “Whoever leaves his wife and takes another is adulterous to her.” And if a wife leaves her husband and goes after another, he commits adultery.” Luke writes the same in chapter 16: “Anyone who leaves his wife and marries another commits adultery.” All of these citations are unequivocally related to the marriage of divorced partners. It is clear that Christ does not make any exceptions. He speaks plainly that even though there is a separation permitted on either partners case, another marriage is not permitted. The savior further said, “Whatever God puts together, let no man put asunder. And so the bonds of marriage was established for life and cannot be broken by human power or even by civil courts.

The teaching of Christ about the indissolubility of the marriage bond is echoed by the Apostle of the nations, St. Paul. In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul writes: “ Those who are in the marriage bond, not according to me, but to the Lord, who says that the wife cannot abandon the husband and vice versa.” These words should be chiseled into the doorpost of every household and into the memory of every husband and every wife in our times. Even today among Christians there is a conviction that there are circumstances that divorce is permitted as well as remarriage. A popular viewpoint in the United States: Why not the possibility of divorce. Who will tell me I can’t get a divorce?” There is an answer to thse two cinical questions? “I do not legislate this, the Lord does.”The teaching about the indissolubility of marriage, “that I will not leave you until death do us part: is not a human discovery, or an invention of the Apostles, Popes, Synods or the Fathers of the Church. It is the teaching as bright as the sun, hard as granite, unerring like the founder of the Church, Jesus Chrtist. The teaching of the Church is of its founder, Jesus Christ. Since it is the teaching of the Founder, the Church has taught it for the length of its existence. The teaching of the Christian Catholic Church has three qualities: “holiness, unity, and indissolubility.

A couple of months ago, in one of the New York publications, I read a short critical piece on an opening of stage play. The commentator, in his analysis praised the performance, saying that it was an interesting statement on life. This interested me. He urged viewing the play because it would be broadcast on a certain day and time. When the time came, I tuned in. In the pre-show there was a commercial on tooth paste. I listened to the glorious praise about the blessed effect of using this tooth past. After that, a romantic utterance: “yours, only yours, forever yours.” O, I thought to myself,”I wonder how long these love teeth will remain. After three days the wedding took place. After a week, the wife complained a insis ted on a separation, and on the 14th day stood before the judge and insisted on a divorce. As a reason she gave the judge that the love of her husband had cooled and was completely gone. She maintained that after a while, he behavior had so endangered her health that living with him was in impossibility. She received a divorce immediately. For the first weeks they couldn’t live without each other. After fourteen days they couldn’t live with each other. So much for the vows and oaths: “yours forever: and “yours, only yours, always yours!”

Another flower in the garden of life. A young couple comes to my door. Both maintain that they came to me because of a very pressing matter. I advised them to see the Pastor, No, they insist to talk with me. OK, I’ll listen. He is 24 years old. She, 22. She is divorced. He is single. Both are Catholic and of Polish persuasion. I ask them of the reason for the divorce. Her direct response:   
“Because I no longer loved him.” I explained to her that the Church does not allow civil divorces and so she cannot undertake a Church wedding. She no longer wishes to talk to me. She rises angry, and says to her partner in a loud voice; “No sir! Religion or no religion, court marriage will do!” Both of them left, slamming the door.

Poles who are living here in America are not Poles of bygone days. True, they had their short-comings, vices, and failings but few wanted to go through a civil divorce. And so we are dealing with divorces on many occasions. The first misunderstanding deals with anger. Here usually a court hearing, and sooner or later a license to take on a civil marriage. It is surprising that such a Catholic man or woman doesn’t have a disturbed conscience, in which nature itself calls and government does not carry with it the force or ability to change the law of God. Let me once more remind you that Christian marriage is not of human origin and no human or governmental power can legislate it, and certainly not a priest or even the Pope. Again the words of the Savior: “What God has joined, let no man put asunder.” Occasionally, non-believers maintain that the Apostol Rota grants divorces. It is an erroneous statement. The members of the Rota only declare the non-validity of the marriage. In other words, the marriage was illegal from the very beginning because of existing impediments. Validity is a state that is equal to all Catholics regardless of birth or state of life. Prince or farmer, beggar or rich man, or the learned or the uneducated – all are equal. The Church cannot go against Christ’s teaching without abandoning Christ Himself. Henry VIII, the Anglican king, asked a divorce from his wife; Pope Clement VII strongly objected. The king pled and threatened but the Pope did not allow him to divorce his wife. And what was the result. The Anglican King, therefore, separated the nation from the Church and created his own Anglican national church. The Pope therefore stood by the teaching of the Catholic Church in consonance with Christ’s teaching about the dissolubility of Christian Sacramental Marriage until death of one of the partners.

There are a plethora of reasons given by married people who want a divorce. Some are real; some are made up. Some sad; some pathetic; others childish and humorous. In reality the general reason is given as “because another woman, another man is more attractive to me than my own husband, than my own wife. Not because of virtue or nobility. Those are rarely considered as do others of a spiritual nature. Not because one is better. Today’s human being likes diversity, seeks change, makes changes. One can change his gloves, pants, dresses; changes shoes; why not change a husband or a wife? Sometimes people do want to change spouses for serious reasons. I must admit that occasionally it is necessary to change because of serious reasons. And the merciful heart recognizes this. It is painful for the person to live with extremes. There are cases where the husband is a miser, gambler, drunkard, or treats wife and children brutally. It is very difficult for the partner to live in this suffering. It occurs at times that a husband will leave the wife, go to another town and does not reveal his location. This is an uncomfortable situation. The Church is merciful in these types of situations. It permits a temporary separation and even a permanent one in the case of the death of one of the partners with the stipulation that another marriage is not possible if both are still living. There cannot be a divorce in the sense of American way of divorce. The destruction of the family as the basic unit which constitutes society ends in disastrous consequences.

The last statistic of divorce taken in 1940 by the Federal bureau of the census is sad and alarming. In 1918 for every thousand marriages 180 ended in divorces, or one divorce for every 6 marriages. In 1940 there were already 212 divorces for a thousand marriages or one divorce in every 5 marriages. Every fifth marriage was dissolved. It seems evident that in the courts there are thousands of applications for divorce from our military soldiers. Despite these alarming statistics and the fact that the family is the fundamental unit of society contemporary sociologies call for less strict attitude toward marriages claiming that the conditions for divorce are too restrictive and puritanical and they ought to be loosened up so that the married not be subjected to cramping of their style. Where is all this headed? How will it all end up? It will end up in free love in the United States as in France. It will be devoid of any moral posture. The benefits of the indissolubility of marriage are great for the family members as well as for the nation. The marital partners themselves are saved from disbelief. If the partners in the marriage new that divorce is easy, the impetus to look outside the family circle would be more evident. Contrarily, when there a strictures on marriage, the tendency is present to stick it out through thick and thin. What makes little sense, at least from my point of view is that certain circles and societies of women battle for making divorce a lot easier. It is a fact that the man even though he was a septuagenarian always seems to find a younger partner for life. And it is easier as well when he is a home owner and has a bank book. And the wife who has given her elder partner a good part of her life has a difficult time finding a partner when her partner dies. Hence a two-fold burden placed on the woman.

The indissolubility of marriage is above all absolutely necessary for the responsible bringing up of the child. Marriage has the solidity of brick, if the brick is not enforced it will crumble. How is a child raised without fatherly care. How is it raised when it does not have the mother’s love? When the child sees the father with an unknown woman, from where is security and the feeling of being wanted? How will this child turn out?

From the indissolubility of marriage arise powerful, noble nations. Healthy marriages are the firm foundation of a healthy society and nation. Why do American youth head into marriage without thoughtfulness, without determination? A young man barely begins to know a girl at a dance or on vacation and already after a couple months or even days, gets a civil license because he knows that if it doesn’t work out, a lawyer can get him out of his boredom. And the wife goes out into the world bewildered and confused.

What is it that can convince people of the necessity of indissolubility of marriage? Whoever loves and wishes the well being of his nation, that person will protect the idea of the indissolubility of the marriage bond at all times and with conviction.