**March 12, 1933**

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

 About two weeks ago, the mail brought me, among the many letters, one whose contents I will share with you, my listeners:

 Chicago, IL February 22nd

“Dear Fr. Justin,

 Please advise me as to the behavior of my daughter. My husband and I, for all these years, gave her what was the best. We worked for her; we thought of her day and night. It was like that until she turned eighteen this January. After finishing high school, she started working downtown. She met an unbeliever . When we found out, we explained the dangers to her. She laughed at us. She started to come home late, she stopped saying her morning and evening prayers. She refused to go to mass on Sunday; she became disobedient toward us, sneering at our reminders, and even talking to us abusively and offensively.

 One day she left for work in the morning, and we have not seen her since. My husband curses and swears, I despair and suffer; I worry day and night and feel like I’m going out of my mind. Do the commandments of God not exist for today’s children?”

 Listen, my beloved and suffering mother: the actions of your daughter; her ingratitude toward the empathetic maternal heart, deserves a harsh and just reprimand. Unfortunately, our kids, emulating the behavior of irreligious youth, discard or ignore the commandments of God and under the banner of modern learning and false progress, move away, slowly, from the virtues which were for ages the jewels of our fathers and forefathers and brought about the wonder of our most obstinate enemies! The source of such an unreasonable approach to life’s responsibilities and, what’s worse, the cause of such conduct, is ultimately the lack of faith and love of God, which causes the complete lack of love toward our neighbor! We do not need to search far for proof of my statement. Whoever has eyes and ears sees them at every step and will hear them wherever he goes. The love of God exists on paper; it is found in Sacred Scripture; but we rarely see it in everyday life! Going once a week to church is not evidence of loving God! It has to permeate us. It should come through our speech and actions, in private and public life, at home, in the street, at work, in company, always and everywhere. All of this is an introduction to today’s talk which is called:

**Do You Love God?**

 In every society, there is a group of people who think of themselves as so intellectually advanced that, without relying on the rules prescribed by Christ out Lord and found in Sacred Scripture, one can, without God, be not only honest and virtuous but more honest and more virtuous than those who do not just believe in God, but also live according to his rules. Listen to the following story, taken from the life of a certain Englishman:

 “A few years ago, a certain English lady was traveling with her three-year-old daughter. A young and seemingly very proper young man entered their train compartment. This new traveling companion, as it turned out, was completely atheistic and even stood at the head of an organization that rejected all the beliefs of the Christian faith. He was going to the city for the annual meeting of all the groups’ members. During the trip, the young man befriended the little girl. He tried to amuse her, giving her his watch to stare at, and he took her and seated her on his lap. The girl looked into his eyes, unabashedly, and smiled with joyful glee. A few minutes before they were to arrive at the destination, the child suddenly asked her young friend, ‘Do you love God?’ The youth blushed under the bright and pure gaze of the girl; it was clear that the unexpected question went to his soul; what kind of reproach came from the mouth of a child! He was speechless!

The child sensed the awkward silence as she came off of his lap and went to her mother, hiding her face in the mother’s dress. The young man, hurriedly and politely, bid farewell with a bow, and not waiting for the train to stop, jumped onto the platform. He went into a carriage which held several of his organization’s officials and immediately went to the meeting he was supposed to lead! It was noticed, however, that he was strangely flustered and quiet, ‘What happened to you?’ asked one of his friends, ‘You are strangely unlike yourself and absentminded.’ ‘I don’t feel good,’ the youth replied, ‘I will have to leave the meeting early to rest.’ He left soon, leaving the deliberations, not waiting until the end. Indeed, he lay down thinking that sleep would wash away the sadness that was filling him, but he could not sleep. The simple phrase, ‘Do you love God?’ resounded in his ears. It seemed as though the voice was right next to him, that it whispered into his ear, and that it demanded a clear and decisive reply, ‘So, I don’t believe! I don’t believe! I don’t believe in anything!’ he replied to his unbelievably excited mind. In spite of this, the question still, as if it still quivered in the air; the pillow, on which his enflamed head rested, seemed to whisper in his ear, ‘Do you love God?’ He only fell asleep by morning, tired and nerve-wracked.

The next day, he was invited to one of his friend’s balls. He was introduced to some ladies, and he asked one out to dance. When it came time to stand in the dancing rows, he went up to the young lady he had just invited and suddenly stopped before her and asked, ‘Do you, miss, love God?’ The young lady, having heard of the young man’s free thinking ways was very surprised by the strange question. ‘Why do you ask?’ she said, looking smartly into his eyes, ‘I know that you sir, do not believe in God and have strange conceptions of what religion is. Where does this interest in my religious convictions come from?’ ‘Forgive me, miss, but that question was put to me yesterday by a little girl in a mail carriage. From that time on, it has not ceased to bother me.’ The whirl of dancing prevented any further conversation, but the young man was still preoccupied. He did not dance with his usual vigor and after he could not find the forgetfulness and consolation he desired, he left the ballroom. Indescribable turmoil pushed him out, he felt a mix-up in his head. The thought, tossed at his soul from the mouth of a child, stuck like an arrow, causing him to shiver.

Returning home, he pulled out the dusty Bible and excitedly began flipping the pages, ‘O God! If you exist,’ he said in his soul, ‘Let me get to know you! If you are, I want to follow you and serve you faithfully! But may I know that you are! God, have mercy on my suffering!’ He spent the night, reading the Gospel. The new words intoxicated him. As daylight streamed into through the window and fell on his burning temples, the youth sank deeper into the wonderful images, moving across his eyes and enlightening, with the light of truth, his sensitive and young soul! How shocked would the friends and associates of this famously blaspheming atheist be if they saw him buried in a sacred text and then kneeling with folded hands, with the mark of deep concentration on his forehead, when his mouth sought the words of prayer to express the thoughts turned toward the Savior, asking him to enlighten and fill him with deep faith. It was a breakthrough in his life. He changed, unrecognizably. He started to read books which, up to now, he had tossed aside. He started to form ideas that were completely antithetical to what he created up till now. The day brought him closer to Christ, who taught that first one must asses and then love with one’s entire soul!

Five years passed by! One morning, the young man was walking through the city, deep in thought, when suddenly he saw a female face through the window on the first floor. The facial features seemed to be familiar. He recognized his travel companion from the mail carriage! She had that same simple and soft countenance, except in her eyes, there was a great sadness. The young man did not hesitate. He ran into the apartment house and rang the doorbell. She opened it, with a surprised look on her face. ‘You don’t recognize me?’ asked the youth with a bow. ‘It seems to me that we met once,’ she replied, looking at him carefully. ‘Do you remember, Miss, our trip from five years ago? Your daughter asked me ‘Do you love God?’ I wanted to answer her today.’ ‘I remember,’ the young woman replied, ‘You seemed to be quite flustered with that question.’ ‘Oh, madam!’ cried out the youth, ‘let me thank your daughter! You will not believe how much I owe her. I would like to do that personally, since she is at that age where she understands how much good that simple sincere question did!’ Two large tears rolled down the young woman’s face. ‘Why don’t you come upstairs with me?’ she answered with tension in her voice. She led him up to a room with a little bed, a nightstand with a little book of devotions, and in the corner, a large stiff doll sat in a child’s chair. ‘That is all that is left of her,’ said the young woman tearfully, ‘the golden-haired angel is gone.’ The young man was clearly moved. ‘That is not all that is left of her,’ he whispered, holding the hand of the sorrowing woman, ‘Because I come here to thank you, madam; my soul’s awakening to a new life is the work of this angel who has gone to heaven.

She moved me with her piercing innocent gaze and her apparently simple question: a new light to my truth-seeking soul. God used her as an instrument to wake me, giving my thoughts a new direction. I owe her the fact that I have attempted to know the Creator of all things and as much as I once vigorously rejected him in the past, today I am willing to profess him publicly. Having deepened my studies of Christ, seeing them as the pinnacle of excellence, I bow my head humbly before God’s majesty.’ The young woman lifted her tear-stained head, looked at him, and for the first time in many years, a godlike joy lit up her face.”

 Our Savior thus leads souls to the truth in many different ways. Who would have thought that in a coincidental meeting, the words of a child would play such a big part in the life of a person who had studied everything, penetrated all, and judged with reason. That reason, however, without feeling and faith, did not bring him happiness, did not bring even one moment of moral happiness, while discovering the basics of spiritual life, approaching the eternal source of love and truth, brought back stability and performed the miracle of conversation. Oh, how we would love to ask so many of our supposedly Christian friends, “Do you love God?” That God, who brought to earth the ideals of the highest and purest love that humans can only imagine! That son of God who commanded to love one’s neighbor as one loves oneself? That love for God, love for Christ, and for our neighbor; that is the text of Christian teaching. The Savior demands from us that we proclaim these teachings not just with words but with actions as well.

 Father of the family, do you really love God? Listen to me. These times we live in are difficult, uncertain, sad, and bring about human poverty. We need unlimited patience, deep trust, and faith in superhuman help! Do you exemplify these virtues? In spite of unemployment, despite the fact that you receive help from the city, maybe in your house your children are painfully and tearfully complaining for the lack of food and clothing. What do you do? You go to a place where you wash some poison over your head that takes away your vitality, clouds your mind, and weakens your strength, but in your eyes, you seemed to grow in power. It seems as though you have become some sort of hero! You go home. You find your despairing wife. Your children, seeing your flaming face, ruffled hair, and wild eyes are crying. How do reply? You are the man, the hero! You are all-powerful! Swearing comes out of your drunken mouth in abundance: curse words, insults, anger, and noise! Yes, indeed, you, father, can really claim to love God! Yes, you belong to the army of fathers for whom, from the mouths of innocent children, every day and night, comes the begging whispers of prayer to the child Jesus, “Holy Infant, convert the heart of our daddy!” Don’t do that anymore, dear father, but show through your deeds how much you love God!

 I also ask all the husbands if they love God. Listen: How many wives, at this moment, are crying, complaining, cursing, and are tearing hair out of their head from despair? Why? The husband forgets who he married at the altar. She, who was once for him a person of respect, adoration, and love is today abandoned, hated, disrespected and is now crying and complaining. And he, with a cynical smile on his face, with the worm of turmoil in his soul; is using the world for his own partying pleasures! And you, husband, dare to claim that you love God?

 What about you, mother, do you love God? Do you remember your own mother? Do you remember her God-fearing, her hard work, her frugality, her sacrifice? Do you follow her example? Are you a good example for your children? Is your house a palace or a prison; are your children a comfort or a heavy weight? Maybe you have a distorted perspective on your Christian maternal responsibilities? Look, God gave you the power and strength with which you can form saints. It depends on you, in great part, what the future citizens of the country will be like. You are the guardian, the guardian angel of human minds and hearts. Do you understand your vocation, your dignity, and your responsibilities? Do you, conscientiously, live them out? If you do not care for them, if you do not fulfill them: can you say that you love God?

 I ask the wives this persistent question: Do you love God? Maybe you allow yourself to be carried away by modern pagan standards that deposed the wife from the altar of esteem and adoration and made her into a toy for the whims of heartless and conscienceless people? Instead of being the support and consolation of your husband are you cursing his moral and material collapse? Did you change the domestic nest into a nest of wild and bloodthirsty animals through bitterness, impatience, distrust, and thoughtlessness? Maybe it’s your fault that the marital act has disappeared like the morning fog? Maybe your husband is a drunk, has fallen in love with gambling, or seeks consolation and forgetfulness outside of the house, amidst unsavory company? If that is true, how dare you claim that you love God?

 Now I turn my attention to our beloved children, younger or older, to girls and ladies, to young men and boys, and I will ask all of you: Do you love God? Tell me that you do! Then explain to me, if you love God, why is it so hard for you to love, respect, and listen to your parents? Maybe God commanded us to love one another and to neglect, forget, or even hate our own parents? Almighty God carved out the fourth the commandment in stone, “"Honor your father and your mother, that you may have a long life in the land which the LORD, your God, is giving you.”[[1]](#footnote-1) That’s true, but so that it is not forgotten, so that people have no excuses, the hand of God, for all ages, today and until the end of the world, drove that same commandment into the conscience, heart, and soul of every newborn child! Is that commandment sacred in your eyes? Son, what does your conscience tell you? Maybe you have a higher degree and thus think yourself better than your overworked father and decrepit mother. Tell me, whose sacrifice and efforts allowed you to get that degree? Look at the tough, almost rocklike hands of your father; look at the wrinkles pitilessly furrowed into the forehead of your mother. Think of how much it cost your parents, how much they paid, for you to become who you are! You don’t even have time to think of those good deeds. What a dark ingratitude you show to those who sacrificed so much for you that they may have, on more than one occasion, shortened their life span so that you could live better

 Several years ago, a Chicago court sentenced three, young, Polish men to death. One of them was asked on the stand what he would like to say. He said, “I would like to be king of the world for a few moments so I could tell all the children of the world, ‘Listen to your parents if you want to be happy.’ ”

 When your parents warn, lecture, or request something of you- don’t just listen but obey! The street guards, the dance and amusement halls of not just poor reputation but those that are unworthy of having good, Christian youth, and all the other places of recreation will not form in your souls a love for God. They will plant in your hearts those little buds of hatred toward anything that has to do with God. Do you love God?

 Finally, I ask the young ladies: Do you love God? Yes, but this not everything. More than one of you, with angelic faces, has a heart of stone which will not allow for good or even sincere words to her parents. Instead of listening to your father, and especially your mother, you follow the advice of others, often unfriendly toward you, and sometimes even directly antagonistic to you. What is the result of all this? You read newspapers, whole columns of sad and painful happenings and the victims are you, the Polish ladies! Usually these are the ladies that call their father, “my old man” and their mother, “my old woman.” Yes, on the sweat of this “old man” and on the tears of this “old woman”, her worries and disappointments, tears and sorrows, nursed by her and raised, you reward them and break the old parents’ hearts! Can these ladies and those like them claim to love God?

 My dear radio listeners:

 We are currently in the season of Holy Lent! May the question “Do you love God” remain in the sight of our souls during the entire season. May those words be written out not just in ink, but with fiery letters, so that they burn into our memory and force us to show love towards God not just in words but in deeds as well! Then, and only then, our lives will be a glory to God, a benefit to us, and a good example to our neighbors.

 Because I was asked to say a prayer for our President Roosevelt, who with practical energy gathered himself to heal the awful conditions in our adopted country, I do so willingly and please repeat after me, word for word:

Let us Pray!

 Give, we beg you, Lord, our servant the President of our United States, the right of divine help, so that with his whole heart, he may seek you, and what he worthily asks of you, may he receive. Fill him with thoughts wrapped in the spirit of Christian love, so that there would come a greater love of neighbor, greater understanding amongst citizens, and that we would all, living in unity and agreement, be able to work to the greater glory of God and our country. Amen.

1. Exodus 20:12 New American Bible. Annotation added by PKC [↑](#footnote-ref-1)