**March 26, 1933**

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

Walking along the streets of our city, whether in the morning or the afternoon, I see groups of men in old, worn-out shoes, in ruined and patched up clothing, often unshaved and looking a little uncared for. Some walk slowly with heavy steps as if they were looking for something they had lost. Others stand compacted in groups in vigorous and focused discussions. One thing hits me: a certain sadness is painted on their faces, caused by some uncertainty, apprehension, and fear. You can see the same thing in every town and in every village as far as this country is long and wide! The one and the same sad sight showing before our eyes for the last three years. If Our Lord would walk the streets today, among other scenes, the following with repeat itself, “Going out about five o'clock, he found others standing around, and said to them, 'Why do you stand here idle all day?’ They answered, 'Because no one has hired us.'”(Matthew 20)[[1]](#footnote-1). The only difference is that these people would answer, “Master, we have been idle for a year.” Others would answer by shouting, “Master, we have not worked for two or three years because no one wants to hire us.”

I wonder what would Our Lord tell these poor souls, who are so patiently waiting for work and employment, so that by sweat of their brows; they can work and earn an honest piece of bread? Would he wave his hand, nod his head, and walk on, not worrying about the crowds. I doubt that very much! After all, who had better or warmer words for the crowds than did this opinionated son of a poor carpenter from Nazareth? Who had more sincerity and encouragement for the crowds? Did he not perform miracles for the crowds? Did he not feed them? Was he not only a brother for the crowds but also their mother and father? Read the bible stories! Read everything there and a little more! It is not surprising that when he said, “The laborer deserves his keep” (Matthew 10)[[2]](#footnote-2), when he said “the laborer deserves his payment” (Luke 10), and when he taught that hurting widows and orphans calls out to heaven for vengeance, it is probable that those, who thought of themselves as the examples of wisdom and virtue, started to criticize the teachings and call the Divine teacher a revolutionary and a disturber of the peace! They did not stop with their persecution until he hung from a rough, wooden cross. However, I will return to the working class and make a little analogy which brings me to the title of today’s talk:

**The Twentieth Century Jurand**

In Henryk Sienkiewicz’s wonderful story, we read about a powerful and noble soldier Jurand;

“Jurand jumped to the side wall, by which the weapons stood, and grabbed a two-handed sword. Like a storm, he crashed down on the petrified Germans! These were hardened warriors, used to battles, killings, and blood, but their hearts collapsed so much that, even when the numbness had passed, they started to retreat and flee, just as a flock of sheep flee from a wolf who kills with one snap of his fangs. The others, seeing the terrific strength and anger of the warrior, gathered in a group to stand their ground. This brought about a greater loss as he, with hair bristling on his head, with crazed eyes, all covered with blood, and heaving blood himself, frenzied and raging, broke, tore, cut up the compacted crowd with the sword, throwing down people on the floor, splashed with blood, just as a storm breaks down trees and bushes. There came a point of terrible fear when it seemed as though this terrifying Mazurian would cut down and murder all of these people, just as a screeching kennel cannot defend itself from a ferocious boar without the help of a shooter, so were these warriors unable to match his power and ferocity. Fighting with him would be only a defeat and death to them.

They ran about the hall, just as a flock of starlings on a field scatters as it is being targeted by a crooked-beaked hawk, but they could not surround him as he, in the thick of battle, instead of finding a place of defense, started to chase them about them around the room and whoever he caught up to he killed, as though with a clap of thunder. Humiliation, despair, hopeless, a transformation into a single blood lust, all seemed to multiply, by tens, his cruel, inborn strength. The sword, which the strongest Teutonic Knights needed both hands to hold, he wielded it with one hand as though it were a feather. He did not seek life, rescue, or even victory, but only revenge. Just as fire, or a river, having broken a dam, destroys everything in its path, so too was he a blind, terrible destroyer. He caught, broke, stamped, murdered, and extinguished human life! They could not strike at his back because, from the beginning, they could not catch up to him and, on top of that, the ordinary soldiers were afraid to even approach from behind, knowing that when he would turn around, no human power will save them from death. Others were stricken by the terrifying thought that a normal man could cause so much destruction and that they were dealing with a man who was getting superhuman strength. But old Zygfryd, and with him Brother Rotgier, came out on the gallery that ran under the great hall windows and called the others to defend themselves there. The others readily jumped to it: so much so that they pushed themselves around in the narrow staircase, wanting to attack the powerful man from there as all regular battle seemed to be doomed.

Finally, the last one slammed the door leading up to the choir, and Jurand remained downstairs alone. Shouts of joy and triumph came from the gallery and soon they were followed by the flight of heavy wooden stools, benches, and iron torch containers. One of the missiles hit him in the forehead and poured blood over his face. At the same time, the great eastern door opened, and the summoned lancers fell into the hall in a crowd. They were armed in spears, pole-axes, hatchets, crossbows with palisades, poles, ropes and all the weaponry that they could grab in a hurry. The crazed Jurand wiped the blood off his face with his left hand to keep his sight clear, gathered himself up, and threw himself onto the entire crowd! The hall was again filled with yells, gritting iron, grinding teeth, and the bloodcurdling screams of dying men! The battle ended when Jurand was caught in a net. They wanted to kill him but the chaplain was opposed to that so they tossed him into the dark castle dungeon.

Diedrich was waiting in his palace room for Zygfryd’s orders. He was a short, stocky man with bowlegged feet and a square face, which partially was covered by a dark, jagged hood, falling over his shoulders. He was wearing a crude ox-hide caftan and girded himself with a belt behind which was a bundle of keys and a short knife. In his right hand, he held an iron, membrane-covered-night torch and in his other hand he held a copper pot and torch. ‘Are you ready?’ asked Zygfryd. Diedrich bowed in silence. ‘I told you to have charcoal in the pot’ The stocky man once again did not answer but only pointed to the log burning in the chimney. He took a iron shovel and gathered in charcoal into the pot, after which he lit the lamp and waited. ‘Now listen, you dog’ said Zygfryd, ‘You once revealed what orders commander Dauveld had given you and the commander had your tongue cut out. Now that you can tell the chaplain all you need to with your fingers, I tell you, if you tell him with even one gesture what I have ordered you to do, I will have you hanged.’ Dietrich again bent his head in silence, only his face winced at the painful memory, since his tongue had been cut out for different reasons than what Zygfryd had proposed. ‘Move forward and lead me to Jurand’s prison.’

In the thick granary walls there was a deepening that led down by a couple of steps to a large iron door. Diederich opened them and went down the steps in the depth of the black abyss, lifting up his lantern to show the commander the way. At the bottom of the stairs, there was a hallway which had unusually low jail-cell doors to the left and to the right. ‘To Jurand!’ said Zygfryd. The door bolts creaked and they went in. The cell was completely dark, so Zygfryd, not seeing well in the dim light of the lantern, ordered to have a torch lit, and soon the bright rays of the torch showed Jurand lying on hay. The prisoner had his feet cuffed while those on his hands were slightly longer to let him feed himself. He was dressed in a sackcloth bag in which he stood before the commander. Now, he was covered with the dark stains of blood as on the day he was captured; when the crazed and raging knight was caught in a net, the lancers had wanted to kill him and left him with several pole-axe wounds. The death was prevented by the local chaplain. The wounds were not fatal but they drained so much blood from Jurand that he was carried into prison half alive. The talk in the castle was that he would die any minute, but his enormous strength staved off death and he lived even though his wounds were not treated and he was thrown into a terrible underground cell where, during the humid days, water dripped from the vaults, and in the winter, the walls were covered with thick layers of snow and ice crystals. He lay on the hay in chains, a weakling, but still so big that, especially while lying, he looked like a block of rock carved into the form a human. Zygfryd ordered to shine the light right in his face and for some time looked at him in silence. Then he turned to Diedrich and said, ‘See, he has only one pupil. Cut it out.’ His voice shook with weakness and senility but for just such an order, the command seemed to be even worse.

The torch shook in the executioner’s hand, yet he leaned it over, and soon drops of burning pitch fell on Jurand’s eye until it covered it completely from the eyebrows up to the cheekbone. Jurand’s face winced, his flaxen moustache lifted up and revealed his clenched teeth, but he did not say a word, either by exhaustion or through the natural persistence of his terrible nature. Zygfryd said, ‘It was promised to you that you would leave a free man. When you leave, you will not be able to blame the religious order as your tongue, with which you had blasphemed against us, will be cut off.’ He gave the signal to Diedrich who let out a strange, throaty sound and hand signaled that he needed both his hands and that he wanted the commander to help him. Then the old man took the torch and held it out with an outstretched, trembling hand. However, when Diedrich pressed Jurand’s chest, he turned his head and looked at the rime-covered wall. The sound of the cuffs rang out after which there was the sound of heaving, human breaths, as if it were one, quiet, and deep groan and then silence!

Finally Zigfryd’s voice sounded out, ‘Jurand, the punishment which you brought upon yourself was due to you, anyway. I had promised Brother Rotgier, whose man killed your daughter, that I would put your right hand in a casket. Diedrich, hearing those words, leaned over Jurand. After some time, the old commander and Diedrich found themselves in the same courtyard, bathed in the moonlight. Having walked down the hallway, Zygfryd took the lantern from the executioner and some dark object wrapped in a shawl.’

Let us throw a dark cover over the suffering and pain, over the bloody suffering of Jurand and that of Danusia. The giant Jurand, now blind and mute, without a hand: all the effect of human evil!

“Jurand listened to the story, without any quivering or motion, so much that it would seem that he was deep in sleep. He heard and understood everything when Hlawa talked about the misery of Danusia. In the hollow of his eyes, two giant tears welled up and ran down his cheeks. Of all the earthly feelings, only one remained; the love of his child. Then his blue lips started to move in prayer. Outside, the first thunders and lightning went off and occasionally lit up the window. He prayed for a long time and again tears fell on his white beard. Until finally, he stopped and a long silence came down which stretched out too long, and became a nuisance as those present did not know what to do with themselves. Finally, the old Tolima, Jurand’s right hand man and companion in every battle, said, ‘Before you stands the man who tortured you and your child. What am I to do and how am I to punish him?’ At these words, certain rays flashed on Jurand’s face and he nodded to have the prisoner brought over. Two henchmen grabbed the prisoner by the shoulder and brought him before the old man. He, having stretched out his hand, ran his find over Zygfryd’s face as if he was trying to remember or to burn into his memory the facial features of the man. He then dropped his hands on the Teutonic Knight’s chest and felt over his shoulders and felt the binding ropes.

Closing his eyes, he leaned his head. Those present thought that he was thinking deeply, but soon he snapped out and pointed his hand toward the loaf of bread in which a knife was embedded. At that time, Jagienka, a Czech, even Tolim and all the henchmen, held their breath in their lungs. The punishment was a hundred times deserved; the revenge was fair: but the thought that a half-dead old man would blindly circumcise the restrained prisoner shocked them to the core. However he, taking the knife, stretched out his pointing finger to the end of the blade so that he would know what he was touching and started to cut the ropes on the Teutonic Knight’s shoulders. Everyone was shocked. They understood the intention and they did not want to believe their eyes. This was too much for them. They started to murmur. Only Father Kaleb started to as in a quivering, crying voice, ‘Brother Jurand, what do you want? Do you want to give the prisoner freedom?’ ‘Yes,’ replied Jurand with a nodding head. ‘Do you want him to leave without revenge or punishment?’ ‘Yes.’ The sound of anger and indignation grew louder but Father Kaleb, not wanting to waste such an unprecedented act of love, turned to the murmuring crowd and cried, ‘Who dares to oppose a saint? On your knees!’ And kneeling himself he began to say, ‘Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy Kingdom come.’ And he recited the ‘Our Father’ to the end. At the words, ‘and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us,’ his eyes turned toward Jurand whose countenance lit up with an above-earthly light.”

Dear Radio Listeners:

Such was Sienkiewicz’s Jurand from the Teutonic Knight times! The workers are the Jurands of today! Every nation, the whole world depends on the gray working masses. The foundations of countries are workers! There is no power and might on earth that is greater than the power and might of workers! The good fortune and wealth of countries is owed to the workers! The hard labor, honesty, and blood of workers contributes to the development and bloom of the world! Unfortunately, this giant, this working army was not appropriately organized. There are Judases in the army today. This giant was weakened on the outside and inside by the drunkenness of people who attached themselves to it. The Teutonic Knight, in the form of unconscionable governments, unjust employers, and bloodthirsty rich men, set a trap and dropped a net into which the worker’s army fell! It blinded this worker with false and cruel lies! It tore his eyes out with a civilization and a light of false learning! With fear mongering, terror, threats, and violence, they closed their mouths and tore their tongues out. To save their own property and skin, with the sword of idleness and unemployment, not only did they cut one hand off, but two.

Now, for three years, today’s Jurand-worker lies weak, helpless, and restrained! I don’t have to explain to you how much courage, endurance, and liveliness has been shown in this uncertain and often desperate times. Where does this power and strength come from? From God, in whom the worker believes, before whom he cries out, and to whom he trustfully prays to everyday. And it seems as though God has finally listened to him. I am thinking especially of our government, our country here, and about our workers. These fifteen million unemployed, not seeking revenge on those who were once their torturers and wrongdoers, only ask for some daily bread, for justice, work, and with a powerful voice that resound off the heavenly clouds, “forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.”

Not far from us, there is a sunny village. Not far too, there is the sun of well-being, peace, and happiness which rises on the principles of old, because they are divine, according to which countries and the world can and will be happy.

1. Matthew 20: 7-8. New American Bible. Annotation done by PKC. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Matthew 10:10. New American Bible. Annotation done by PKC [↑](#footnote-ref-2)