**March 26, 1939**

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

Several years ago I was returning from Baltimore to Buffalo. If you know our neck of the woods, you know that all trains cut through the poorest neighborhoods on the Southwest side. Therefore all trains are forced to slow down before they reach the main station. It gives the passengers time to glance out the window and gaze at the scene before their eyes. I was at the window on this spring morning and not only looked at the small, poor houses, which looked like Christmas tree decorations in the sun’s rays and smiling joyfully for young and old - I fell into deep thought. On the outside they looked poor, cold and ordinary. However if the human eye was capable of seeing through the walls and curtains, it would certainly see acts of dedication, sacrifice, love and generosity. These poor and forgotten people would become heroes worthy of praise, honor and glory. Lost in my thoughts, I did not see the figure standing by my side and looking out through the same window. He also gazed. He also thought. He was dressed in the current fashions. He looked as if he just walked out of a department store viewing window. I repeat; he was lost in thought as was I. At last, he looked away from the window and looked at me, and slowly speaking, he spoke: “These suburbs: they are the diseased flesh of the entire world. It is full of dirt, deprivation and poverty. Burn it down and be finished with it.” - I refrained from replying to this wise-man. I then thought to myself, I too was raised in a similar house in a similar side of town, and learned the love of my parents, was raised by them lovingly and that the greater part of humanity lives and abides happily on this earth in similar homes, on farms, in woods, patched by mines, and my heart skipped a beat. I looked at the smartly dressed man. He probably was taken aback by my countenance and my words to him. At the beginning he could not believe what he was hearing. He stopped giving me his prior looks. His smirk disappeared from his tightened lips. He listened with disbelief. He shook his head. After ten minutes of my verbal exposition he said, “I never imagined that a priest could paint such a portrait of happiness, peace and satisfaction, in such walls, in these poor “huts”. He gave me his hand in departure and we went our ways separately. And now to my talk:

HOUSE AND LIFE

When I travel through various towns whether here in American or across Europe, tourism always takes me to see certain parts of town and show me the magnificent palaces and marvelous alley ways forts and thoroughfares. The do not neglect to show churches, museums, theaters and parks. Always, however, with a sense of pride, the tour guide points out certain homes, mansions, living quarters and sometimes asks, “Isn’t that a beautiful home!? A real toy house, isn’t it?” I look and see an architectural gem surrounded by a Garden of Eden with beautiful cultivated plants, grasses, lawns, flowers from throughout the world, flowing fountains. I must admit that the sight is very pleasant to the senses. However this is just the appearance. In truth, is the inside beautiful, warm, pleasant, and happy? To live inside of these structures, is walking on thick carpets, sleeping in king’s beds, walking through decorative corridors and rooms, eating and drinking from costly utensils – is this an indication of happy living? All this plenty and riches, all of this: can it change into a palace of suffering and imprisonment and lack of peace. All these magnificent structures can it recreate life as in a poor home. A house is not always a home. But give me your hand. I will lead to one of these homes along the railroad tracks. Here lives a family well known to me over the years. A father, mother and four children live here. Let us enter. A woman greets us with a smile! The living quarters are poor but spotless. The woman recounts this story to us: “When we moved into this house, bought cheaply, it was dirty, in disrepair and neglected. We had to clean, scrub, and bring it to something livable. At the beginning we had no money as yet for wallpaper. Not wanting to borrow, we had to work toward it gradually. Then after two years, we were able to paint the house and create a lawn. Gradually we acquired new furniture. My husband does not earn much but it is regular. I take care of the house and the finances. We don’t have much but we get by. We are satisfied, happy, and healthy. We have something to thank God for. And we are thankful, morning and evening with table prayers... This little house is our nest. The duty of my husband is to work for me and the children. My wish is to make my husband and children happy. We are happy to do this in unity. You may tell me that this is a highly unusual state of affairs and this is an unusual home. I assure you: you are mistaken. There are thousands and thousands of such homes. There are more of them than you can imagine. What can one honest father accomplish or mother’s care accomplish and how can they dedicate themselves to making family living pleasant. Why don’t every father and every mother understand that happy family living in satisfaction depends on them? Besides, human life spent in dissatisfaction is empty, with no goals, hard, without meaning, miserly and unhappy. As an example, I read a letter dated February 5th of last year. I translate it since the original is written in English! “I am a young Polish woman. I am twenty one years old, an average American woman. I like a good time but keep in mind my faith. My problem lies with my parents whom I love dearly and respect deeply. I am afraid that unless the situation at home changes, I am going to leave the family and it will not be my fault. My parents listen to the Rosary Hour Program regularly and I sincerely believe that it is only through Father Justin that I can understand the reasoning and heart of my parents, in order for them to change their outlook on me. We live in the poorest section of Chicago. I have to admit that my father and mother cared a great deal about our education and saved up for it. I am thankful for that. But they are under the impression that we should live as they did 40 years ago. Despite that our home has certain comforts; mother does not care if it looks like a real and warm home. Everything is old fashioned. The kitchen, the bedroom, the rest rooms, in one word is a hut, not a home. My father, despite many talents, currently is neglectful. Maybe he lacks initiative because our mother has been drinking for some years now. I am ashamed to admit it, but perhaps it has some value because being a child, I was impatiently and fearfully awaiting my father’s return from work, so that he would help me to pick mother off the floor and carry her to bed. My father never had a warm meal after his long hours of hard work. While growing up, I somehow managed to help myself but always felt shame and hurt, for the neighbors tongues would not give us rest. Sometimes I was ashamed to go out into the street because everyone would ask me if my mother was drunk again. My mother went out while drunk, got into trouble, and ended up in jail. I have to say that there is no pleasant mother on earth when she is sober. But that is very seldom. When she has too much, she gets hateful especially to her own children. Then she curses and ends up in a worse state. Last year for a whole month for thirty days from morning to night, she was drunk daily. When I returned from work in the evenings there was neglect in the house. She was unwashed with her hair disheveled and uncared for. She hit me several times and I was black and blue. My father, enduring all this went into drinking himself. My heart was broken because I had always respected my father. Right now, looking out the window, I see my father unshaven and looking like a tramp and going out to steal. I remember him when he was sober, industrious, and could be praised by any child. Today, neglected without any emotion or consideration of self he does not care about his children. We live among strangers of different nationality and I am beginning to relate with them. My mother does not like that and is angry with me. When I tell her that it is her fault because she is drunk and picks a fight when drunk and so had to move away from Polish neighbors because of shame. We have lost contact with our relatives. Father Justin, you know that politeness dictates that when my girlfriends come for a visit, I need to give them food, some coffee or ice-cream. My parents won’t even permit me to do that What should I do. I don’t want to leave home. It is dangerous me, as I am, to leave home. I can’t stand listening to the gossip and I am ashamed to live at home. I would like to praise my parents but who can be proud of a drunken father or mother? Our home is cold and without love. Father Justin, I would like to live a normal life in peace. I know that the sun can’t always shine and I can’t expect it to shine on me alone. I do not desire riches or a palace but only a clean and cozy home where I could live pleasantly with a father and a mother. Father Justin could you speak to my parents and parents like them that they put their children into despair and lower them so that they lose self-esteem even though we children are not bad. Please excuse by errors and improper phraseology but I am enervated and discouraged. Please pray for our family for we need prayers for our family to be one and a family of love where harmony dwells. What does that mean? Nothing more than that one must, I repeat, must have respect for the other. Home is not only for one person but for the whole family. The goal of a home is to unify and coordinate all persons to love and respect one another. I understand the life of a family cannot be a Garden of Eden and that there will always be some type of disagreement. Parents must be in harmony for the sake of their children. It is possible. I understand that, from time to time, there will be friction and clashes between husband and wife; but husband and wife should get through these to carry on the household procedures. It is not good to hold grudges for a lengthy time. Then hurt turns to hatred which puts a wall between them, after which there can be not talk about agreement and healing. Ancient Chinese had a brutal way of torturing their enemies. They tied them down and had water drip on their heads continually for long periods of time. It didn’t seem like much from the beginning but after drop by drop slowly at a maddening pace and drove the prisoner crazy. And so little things that annoy over long periods of time, grow, get more intense and turn a home into a torture chamber. The family members should be ever alert to what they say and do, that would bring askance to other family members. Children also must be taught about family behaviors to produce harmony. They should be accustomed to graciousness. I was in homes where the children were seen but not heard. They behaved like mice under a broom {metaphor for quietness}. You could hug and kiss them. These little ones elicited being loved. I was however in homes where the children, despite that there were guest in the house, screamed as if they were being crucified or their shoes were on fire. I felt that they should be taken by the ears and turn them like an alarm clock. The first group of children decorates a home like flowers; the second group soils the home like weeds soil a beautiful lawn. The Abbot Dimnet wrote that our first obligation towards society is “to be ourselves” – and we can be ourselves only when we are alone with our selves. What does that mean? It means that older children should have their own rooms, where they can have private time and space. Children friends should feel comfortable in visiting. What is important here is an open heartedness. People should learn from us as the saying goes: “A guest in a house is God in the house.” Or “We welcome and share with you our home.” {Czem chata bogata – tem rada}. Let me suggest two other things: Let the home be in order and scrupulously clean. Then it will be inviting. And let the father, mother, and children sit together at mealtime. At the time when we eat, we should speak of happy and pleasant things. Talk of death, sad occurences, illness, hospitals, operations should be left behind the fence since they kill the appetite and do not aid digestion. If you follow these ingredients in your home, without doubt your homes will turn into palaces of happiness, harmony and peace. Your life will be pleasant the joyous!