MARCH 28, 1943

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

We are on the threshold of Lent. It is a time set aside for self-denial through abstention from certain foods and drinks, and foregoing some recreational activities which ordinarily would be permitted. The next four weeks should be a recollection and a salutary time spent in considering the passion of the Lord and his salvific grace. And it would not hurt especially in this your when we have before our eyes so much suffering and bloodshed and death in humanity through war. There is much to be gained by these kinds of practices which bring us spiritual good. Above all, we will come to be convinced that the fundamental existence of the whole world is suffering. We find this truth in nature itself; nature demonstrated this well. Where should be go for insight? Isn’t it the Faith in Christ. In the words of the Anglican writer, Benson: “A bird consumes flowers in life, to feed itself, the flowers bloom on rotting, wagtails sacrifice parents, a whole life arises from the birth pangs, and exists only by way of death. People eat animals, animals eat plants, and plants feed on minerals. These are facts of nature without regard to the way we like things to be or not.. At least our faith gives us the ability to see these things and maintain that minerals bring plants to life, plant to animals, animal to people. Faith goes a lot further, because it tells us to believe that man, suffering and bearing up with things without complaining about life’s curiosities. Our faith would not be real if it threw out suffering as the basis for the life of man. It would lie and that is our experience. Besides in the Old Testament we read hundreds of times about dedication and sacrifices. Did not the Savior become a lamb, in order to die for lost sheep? Did not the Son of God become a son of man in order that people could become sons of God? Did he not die on the cross in order that the sons of man become sons of God? And all of this was accomplished through suffering. “I cry for you, because you do not cry; I suffer for you because you do not suffer.” And He cries out further, “whoever wishes to come with me, let him take up his cross and follow me.”

THE ACTORS IN THE PASSION OF THE LORD

Historically and logically the first and very important actor in the tragedy of the so called Passion of Christ is no other than Judas. There was a time when he believed, when he passionately followed Christ, when he announced the teaching of his Master. After all that, he changed. No more. There is no ther faith on the earth which can kindle such adherence, such honor and such heartfelt love as does the Catholic faith. And consequently there is no faith that is hated as much as the Catholic faith. By whom? By those who once had its faith, the honored and loved it at one time. If someone wants to hear the whole barrage of mudslinging, a whole dictionary of bad mouthing and calumnies and all that in the written and oral work, check out an assault on the Catholic Faith. People of other faiths generally don’t do that but ex Catholics are probably the most vociferous. And so when Judas decides to leave, he ends up being a traitor. Many traitors betrayed their friends and benefactors. Their names disappear in history. But not Judas. It remained in the pages of history and it will remain there forever. Why? Because he perpetrated the greatest crime on earth. Because the Person betrayed and the deed performed were of greatest importance to mankind’s salvation. But without Judas, there would be no playing out of the drama of the crucifixion. Others, many others were playing out their roles in the tragedy: soldiers and crucifiers without mercy – Pilate, Herod, Caifas. And so the Lord phrased it in these words: “It would be better if he (Judas) had not been born!”

The sin of Judas is not as rare as we may think. NO. Take for example those who changed their ideals and told the world with a feigned enthusiasm. Those who at one time willingly listened to the teach about the faith and honored it and were truly disciples of Christ. Quickly left the table and abandoned Christ’s church. And night bathed their soul. Or those who changed the ideals of Christ. Maybe they held on to their faith somewhat but their deeds were treacherous or careless to such a degree that people said with cynicism, “And this is a Catholic.”

In the end, to every Christian soul comes Christ and He is sometimes given away to a Pilate, into the hands of Caifas or with self loving hands – Herod. Christ domes to the soul like a friend to be met in the garden and the friend hails him with a kiss. – a Judas kiss. Like every soldier under Napoleon carries in his satchel a marshal’s baton, so every Christian holds the possibility of a Judas kiss on his lips. Every Christian who abandons Christ poses an argument against Christ. The life of every bad Christian gives multitude reasons against belief in the Christ who lives and is honored.

The sin of Judas could be called “catholic.” And that without further elucidation or explanation.

The world as it is must look upon religion with distaste because faith demands on thing but the world pushes religion away. Faith maintains that the world is not sufficient in itself. Chesterton, the great writer reminds us that the earth takes the form of the globe but the church, the form of the cross. The globe since it is in its shape a circle which is a symbol of totality demonstrates its preoccupation and total absorption in life. In itself it cannot enlarge itself without bursting. But the cross is a symbol off unlimited scope and can enlarge itself and is never satisfied with itself, it always has four corners which could enlarge into infinity. It could be expanded without harm to itself. The world’s hatred of faith is a highly meaningful complement. People can argue with themselves in all kinds of matters: I have in mind people who are contrary and argumentative. Despite this arguing among themselves there is one thing that they all agree on: faith is their enemy because it curbs them in their activity. And what if the conversation on religion touches on Catholicism? Their example do not traverse the German Third Reich. And how about the Fascists; we need not touch on that aspect of the world’s evil. Take the example of the Polish Newspapers among us. Why do they constantly spit on what is holy to us? They don’t do that to other denominations of religion. And I do not speak of papers or weeklies that are openly atheistic and faithless, but I have in mind publications who hold the torch of education and hold it high. And so we come to two actors in the tragedy of Kaifas and Annais. Both were learned. And both were progressives. “better that one man die instead of a nation.” Why? Because Christ said, “I am the truth, the whole truth and the only truth.” That did not agree with the convictions of Kaifras and Annanias. They thought that they were the truth. They could not did not want to believe that the truth stood before them. They could not understand that the image that stood before them, a suffering and despised image, was a nature above the human nature.

I come now in my talk to Pilate, who played not a small role in the tragedy of the cross. There are people who claim that they would want to believe but who just cannot get themselves to believe. They think that it is very fortunate not to doubt and to have a lively faith in which to believe in.