March 28, 1948

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

This is the way the four evangelists write about the resurrection of the Lord. “After the Sabbath, when the sun began to shine on Sunday morning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came intending to visit the grave. An earthquake shook the land. An angel of the Lord appeared from heaven, came to the grave and moved aside the large stone and sat on it. And his image was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow. And from fright, the guards were frightened and white as death. When the Sabbath past, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Salome bought oil and went to anoint the Lord. Early Sunday morning they came to the grave after sunrise. They said among themselves, “who will roll away the stone so we can anoint the Lord? The stone is too large for us. – They looked up and observed that someone had moved away the stone. The entered the cave grave and noticed a young man dressed in a white cloth and they were taken aback. He said to them: “Do not be afraid. Are looking for Jesus of Nazareth? He has risen from the dead: He is not here. This is the place where He was buried. Go, tell his disciples and Peter: Go before us to Galilei: you will see him there as He had said. And they went hurriedly from the grave with fear and great joy, rushing to tell the disciples what they were told. And the Lord met them as they were on the road saying, “Greetings.” And they came to him and knelt at his feet giving Him homage. Jesus then said to them, “Do not be afraid, go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee: you will find and see him there. And so Peter and another of the disciples took the road and came to the grave. Both went; but the other disciples got there before Peter and came to the grave. He bent over to see the clothes and didn’t go in. Then came Peter who and went into the grave and looked over the clothes, and the cloth that was on the head, which lay folded apart from the shroud. Then came the other disciple who first came to the grave and looked and believed. They did not yet understand that it was necessary for the Lord to rise from the dead. And they went away.” Today’s talk is entitled:

“THE HOLY RESURRECTION”

In the first place I will note a detail, which is not well known, but belongs to the history of the Resurrection! When the pious women went away from the grave, the soldier-guards came to and hurried into town to tell the powers that be what had occurred at the tomb. The ruling authority than gave the guards a sum of money not to tell them what had happened. Tell people that His disciples took Him away as they slept. And they did as they were told and were believed to this day.”

”THE GRAVE OF CHIRST – A MIGHTY TOMBSTONE”

The Catholic Church, not without reason, celebrates the Lord’s Resurrection with the greatest solemnity. With joyous hymns the show honor and invite the faithful to celebrate that empty grave of the Resurrected Christ as a tombstone of the most powerful testament to the redemption. Christ the Lord had died to conquer death and be victorious over death in the end. It is not sufficient that the Savior will bring us back to life in imitation as Christ was brought back to life. If we sincerely believe in the mystery which our faith proclaims to us today we ought to be glad of what our Savior accomplished for us. Today our faith through the eyes of our soul presents the historical fact of the greatest weight, which not only should imbue every human heart and mind with lasting impression of what a great mystery has been accomplished by Christ in His Resurrection. Since the proof of its veracity, and the fact that the resurrection itself is adequate and sufficient for proof and to prove the truth of any and all articles of Christian faith. The Resurrection, that greatest of all miracles backing up the entire faith, it confirmed by many witnesses whose testimony is valid, and stands of itself as testimony. Where do these testimonies come from? In the first place from the lips of the Apostles. Then from the lips of the enemies of Christ. And finally from the lips of the entire world of Christianity. And so it was. The Apostles publicly and in all seriousness, spoke of the Resurrection of the Lord to all Jews and pagans, the learned and the common man, the followers and the enemies at every occasion! That conviction forced the Apostle Paul to call out to the Corinthians: “If Christ did not rise from the dead, your faith is for nothing.” Can it be that the Apostles were deluded, or exaggerated? The Savior had so often given his Apostles proof of the reality of His Resurrection, that one needed to be blind and deaf if they doubted the fact of the Resurrection. For forty days that Christ remained on earth, he appeared to them many times and spoke with them and clarified and explained the scriptures, showed him his wounds, permitted them to touch him, and sat at the table with him and ate with him. In addition, He not only appeared to his disciples but to others, as Paul writes to the Corinthians: “Christ the Lord appeared to Peter and then to the eleven. Later He was seen to more than five brothers with whom he lives together and were still alive.: And so there can be no talk of deception unless we claim that God himself blinded the Apostles that they did not see what they saw, hear what they heard and who would be so naïve to claim that all was a falsehood. – When the women went to the tomb to anoint the body they hurried back to town to relate the stone was moved from the grave of the crucified Christ that they saw an angel and heard his voice and actually saw Christ – the Apostles not only wanted to believe them but thought that the women were carried away with their emotions. They thought themselves that something was wrong. Thomas, who was a witness was cynical about the related stories and said that unless he put his hand into the wounds in His side, he would not believe it. And the Resurrected Son of God humbled himself in front of Thomas when Christ appeared to the twelve eight days after the Resurrection and said to them, “Peace be with you. And then He said to Thomas “Put your fingers into the wounds in my hands and in my side and do not doubt but believe.” Thomas replied, “My Lord and my   
God!” Perhaps some would claim that the Apostles invented the story and put it forth as the truth. – Not possible! The Apostles were honest people and saw the worth of the truth. Their greatest opponents could not and didn’t know how to make any kind of falsehood palatable humble people far from seeking riches or honors; people who scorned deception and lies could not bring themselves to believe the pride and cynicism which claimed that Christ did not resurrect. Unknown people, of low birth and dismissed in the eyes of the world; people without talent, capability, would manage to instill faith in such a miracle like the resurrection? And even if we assumed that the Apostles tricked the world and tricked us in believing and fooled us, we have to ask ourselves, how they would profit out of something like a lie and a hoodwink? Listen, no one lies for no purpose whatsoever without personal benefit. Talking about a resurrection the Apostles would have to deal with the disbelief of their own countrymen, their own nation. They would expose themselves to persecution, jail, suffering and death. Uselessly they would be threatened in all kinds of ways and besides that they did not stop their claims at the pagan objections. The fear of torture and imprisonment they did not stop broadcasting and writing about the miracle of the resurrection. They continued to maintain the truth about the resurrection despite torture, in prison, and suffering. Finally they gave their life as a testament to their proclamation of the truth as they saw it. Despite all of these things they did not manage to convince the people who did not believe in the first place. One cannot judge them of any error, seduction as they continued to broadcast it to their own people or the pagan Romans. They could not hoodwink the people even if they wanted to. Why? The territory of Jerusalem and the testimony where Jesus had performed so many miracles was Jewish land, the place of his birth. The Pharisees had seen the Passion of Christ; they saw him perform miracles. They saw him crucified, taken from the cross dead. Christ, who meekly walked the earth and spoke words of love during his public ministry; the prophecies; all pointed to the veracity of the Resurrection. If the Resurrection was a lie and a fiction, why was there not an outcry because of such an unbelievable event? The grave was guarded carefully so that no falsehood could be even thought of. It was the government’s aim to prevent anyone removing his body and it was carefully crafted. How could the Disciples of Christ be capable of hoodwinking the public? The testimony of Christ’s disciples was beyond reproach. The enemies of Christ could not manufacture any proof that Christ did not resurrect.

The first witnesses to the Resurrection were the guards put at the grave site to present the possibility of the disciples to steal the body. They were frightened by the event and went to the Jewish priests to inform them of the miracle. The priests, aware of the validity of the testimony and fearful of the veracity of it, paid of the guards to lie about the event to save face. They told the guards: “Say that His disciples came at night when you were sleeping and stole the body.” Would any educated person in the law use a payoff to lie if that person believed the truth himself? And again, if they had the smallest doubt of the guards’ claim, they would demand a grave penalty for their lie. Even the lie that the guards would tell to the people, namely that the disciples stole the body of their Master while they slept gives testimony of the Resurrection. How would the guards know if the disciples stole the body if the guards were sleeping? And so, St. Augustine: “You lied! If the guards slept, while the disciples stole the body! And if they didn’t sleep, why would not they have prevented the theft! Everybody of sound mind has to admit the testimony of the guards when confronting their superiors was true and that Jesus, in fact, was raised from the dead. The Apostles are not satisfied with merely telling about the resurrection in Jerusalem and the Jewish lands but go out to the whole world, to other nations to tell about the teachings of the Master from Nazareth who gave up his life for the salvation of the human race on the cross at Golgotha, and rose on the third day from His grave. Both Jews and pagans accept the Christian faith. That same faith not only grows but is spreading and it reaches to the ends of the earth. Is it possible that this faith was able to spread as much as it does and exist for 2,000 years if it was based on falsehoods and lies? – If the Jews and the pagans did not believe in the truth of the Resurrection, what could make them forsake the religion of their fathers and convert to the Christian religion, and take on a religion which expects suffering and strict commandments, obligations, and persecution and even a martyr’s death? For faith in the Resurrection people accepted blood, sweat and tears for two thousand years. Can a person loving truth imagine that God would let people to believe and error of a lie? For this reason the witness of the Christian world as regards the Resurrection must be worthy of faith. – What should the resurrection of Christ mean to us? It should be the underpinning of our faith in the God-ness of the Lord Christ. It should be the foundation of the faith in the truth of Christ’s teaching and the bracing of our faith. The argument is plain: The resurrection of the Lord is the foundation of our faith. Since the Lord truly resurrected from the dead, as he had prophesied solemnly, he was the Son of God, and His teaching has to be from God and true and for that reason it behooves us to believe in Him with a deep abiding faith. For God is the truth and eternal wisdom which cannot be wrong nor cheat others. The Savior Himself spoke about His future Resurrection and when He actually resurrected from the dead, the Apostles referred to it the most and the most to prove that the Christian religion is true and divine. “Look, they said, “we speak about the teachings of Him, who on the third day rose from the dead.” - And we also referring to the Resurrection too, make the argument that Christ is the true God and his teaching is true. And thus the reason why in today’s Feast we sing the song: “We believe, that the Lord Christ rose from the dead, assured us eternal live, saved us from everlasting death and came to save the entire world.” There are other lessons to be drawn from the Resurrection. Saint Augustine claimed, “In the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus there is a miracle and an example: a miracle in order for you to believe; an example, to give us hope.” Saint Gregory said, “If Christ had merely promised the resurrection of the body and did not show by his own personal example, who would give credibility to faith in Him. But he resurrected by His own power. But that He resurrected by His own power he showed what kind of reward we would receive. The resurrection of our Savior strengthens our hope in our own personal resurrection. St. Thomas Aquinas confirms that His resurrection is the reason and the example for our own resurrection. And so St. Paul says,”If the dead do not rise – neither did Christ rise from the dead. How much joy can we the faithful posit in those words as we pass through our garden of Olives and the sufferings we endure as we travel through our own personal daily life? How much heroic manhood did patient Job undergo as he experienced his sufferings and mad him the wondrous person that he was? Listen to his experience: “I know that my Savior lives, and in the last day I will rise from the earth…and see God with my fleshly eyes. That hope is hidden in my heart. That same hope was, throughout the last two thousand years, the foundation and source of joy to Christians of every state of life, sex and age, through persecutions and worries from the catacombs to the Nazi concentration camps. That is why the faithful always repeated after the Apostle of the Nations: “We know that who awoke Jesus will also awake us in Christ, it is why we do not get discouraged because we know that our faith will bring us everlasting glory if we persevere. It does not mean that we are free from our sufferings in this life but it will serve us well in heaven if we persevere in our Christianity according to the Lord’s teachings. That same hope and faith should lift us up and console and strengthen us in all our obligations in life. Why should we uselessly worry and be sad in material losses in this life since we have so many confirmations that if we persevere in patience, we will reach eternal rewards. Why complain about our cresses and sufferings in time when our faith teaches us that we will be rewarded with lasting unmitigated satisfaction. Why despair over the loss of close ones when we have the assurance that in the last day we will be reunited with them in heave. Why lose sight in the midst of our tribulations that we are convinced of the fact that these hand which work responsibly for the greater glory of God, that these legs, that walk the straight and narrow, that these eyes who looked placidly into the future and do not lose sight of their goal with the help of our faith, that these ears which paid close attention to the words of God, that this tongue which prayed daily that God forgive, begs and thanks God for the numerous graces and goodness, that these organs of the flesh which we used to do good, will one day raise from the cold and dark grave changed, gloriously and will take place in heavenly union with our Savior. Let the Feast of the Resurrection be for us a protection in the midst of the vicissitudes of life for one day we also will resurrect. The Resurrection of the Savior ought to be an example and an awakening to our spiritual resurrection, that death and the grave will not be victorious over us. We need to die to sin, then rise to justice, to a practical Christian life. What does that mean? It means conversion to the Christian way. Otherwise the will be no real worth brought about by the Easter message. ”We know,” wrote the Apostle of the Nations – “that the resurrected Christ will die no more and death will not rule over us. This is something worth remembering. Many, altogether too many in Lenten practices enter into the path of penance, but it doesn’t last long. Like a blaze of dry hay which is in conflagration and then quickly is put out. After a few days or a few months our resolutions cool down and go back to their humdrum state of worldly concern. Ezekiel, the prophet said it. He saw walking flesh which rapidly fell into graves. Finally, if we do not believe in the Resurrection, what do we have left? Despair and dissipation. Then the animals that is bereft of reason rather than man, who from cradle to grave bears the brunt of life and hope for a better future, if these are fruitless strivings, what’s the worth of it all. We can’t afford to agree with those who maintain that our earth is one large grave which time populates corpses by the generation. God did not create man and put him on earth to be a useless being digging a grave. Christ did not suffer through his death and resurrection that creation be a fruitless effort. The Savior permitted his crucifixion and spilling of his blood without any meaning. And we to must work, suffer, and die and also resurrect. Take away the faith of the resurrection from the people and what is left? Debauchery, sensuality and despair – suicide! If there is no Resurrection why life virtuously and sincerely, then all of us end up the same way. – death and nothingness. God did not create man to live in mud and then die miserably without hope or faith. It was not for that that Christ came into this world suffering and dying miserably but rather than we live honorably, nobly, and temper our d With that kind of desires and weaknesses, that we endure and survive hoping for a better future and a life after death. With that kind of faith in our hearts let us sing in this day:” This is the day the Lord had made; let us be glad and rejoice in it.

Three years ago, a young American soldier, fell on the field of battle punctured with a German bullet. The American army had to maneuver and maneuver attacked by the German hordes. Hard to have left the wounded soldier on the field of battle about seven miles from the American front. When he came to consciousness he had a fever and want. He tried to get up but could not raise himself; he fainted and lost consciousness. He lay there through Good Friday to Easter Sunday morning. When he came to, he lay in a field hospital, with a gentle face of a chaplain in front of him. The voice of the chaplain uttered: “You say, my son, that you were wounded on Good Friday? And that you lay on the field of battle until this morning? Do you know that this is the Sunday of the feast of the Resurrection: Easter Sunday? “I know Padre! For me too is a resurrection.” How much of a lesson is there for us in this utterance of the American Soldier. We all believe, we believe strongly that after Good Friday we away the triumphal Easter Sunday.