March 3, 1940

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

It was quite a while ago that we celebrated the Feast of Christmas. This Holy Day is one of the best loved among our Christian Feasts. It is best loved by all of humanity for it touches us all without exception. Christ came with love for the whole human race. He came on earth as a tiny, innocent, and defenseless babe. Our Savior was born of poor parents, in a poor crib, in a forlorn environment. The Prince of Peace was born to all people of good will. Two thousand years ago the earth was burning just as today it burns; people lived without peace and doubt similar to our present time. By law what shone through was the principle of revenge and hatred as "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth." Life was hard, subjugated. People were strapped with government laws which cramped their freedom. They were human laws, for the greater part of enemy invaders whose fire and sword ruled over the weak. They later were deported into slavery from which they could not extricate themselves; the government imposed taxes on those who were left behind and used them for hard manual labor, tormented them with hunger, took away from the right of citizenship and lowered them to the state of dumb animals. Legions lived in this state of subjugation. The people were exhausted and launched into despair, in doubt, and without hope. Suddenly, on the preternatural souls of humanity, came the echo: “Glory to God in the highest and peace to men of good will.” People understood that doubt, fear, despair and slavery ended its unhappy rule and on the horizon of life, the sun of peace appeared, because under the figure of a small Prince of Peace the sun was rising. It is for this reason that the Feast of Christmas is such a beloved Feast. Is it true that the coming of Christ to the people, there was established a spirit of the sought for peace: Read the history of the first four centuries after the birth of the Prince of Peace. Look through the centuries of the Middle Ages. Page through the history of modern times. Look at the state of the world in current times, at the last twenty five years. Look as what is happening around us today. Like those in previous times we too live within discord and lack of peace. Why? We will see in a while. This so far is just to be a preface to our talk whose title is:

THE SILENT FEAST OF PEACE

Do not be surprised that, in the season of Lent, I am speaking to you about the Feast we celebrate just a while ago, the Feast of Christmas. I am forced to do this and the reasons are not mine. On December 24th 1939, the Primate of Poland, His Eminence, Cardinal Hlond spoke on the Vatican radio. He spoke on the Vigil of Christmas. This noted wanderer Cardinal, said, “The vigil, the vigil of the feast of the Birth of Christ, is different in certain respects from vigils of the past. The nation was fraught with an advent of dark days and difficulty. If I were to speak in the biblical language of the liturgy of the Lord’s Birth, I would term it a “vigil” from the days of King Herod, a nation’s vigil, “where there was no room at the inn”; a vigil of those “who took the child and his mother and fled to Egypt”; a vigil amidst “voices of the imprisoned where tears and cries were heard”; the Polish vigil of “crying sons and the inability to be cheered up for they were not existing;” a vigil on the battlefields, amid graves and ruins, a vigil in concentration camps, foreign prisons of nearby countries; a vigil of the disinherited; a vigil of families without a hearth, in hunger, without a church, without the ritual, without the table of food, without the wafer, without a Christmas tree, and without gifts. - And this annual Christmas Eve ritual does not flow out of the primate of the diocese, nor does it glide on Polish wave; it wanders through a war-torn country. Let a kind and fatherly Vatican wave play the foundation for it along the roads of Polish pilgrimage. Let the barbed wires of the concentration camps of our agony wring out. Let the winter winds reach the silent fronts of war. Looking for a heartfelt greeting, let them carry over Polish antennas to every Polish family until finding a reception in a Polish dwelling on this and the other side of the ocean announce the Primates wishes to all those who seek them in Polish word and Polish Christmas Carol. In the midst of orgies of hatred, amidst so many cried out pains of man, there lies before us, in a stable, as always the heavenly Savior. Nothing has changed. Christ remains the central truth of the Christmas Vigil as in ages past. The Word, which became flesh, still lives among us. And we have his truth with us, that eternal truth, which in our days experiences a new disturbing development through the sad unfolding of contemporary events. For people of good will, to whom the heavenly message heralds peace; for those who do not want to embroil the world in war but build people’s happiness instead, the teaching is clear in the present moment, and clearly evident is the prognostication of the future, as well as the daily alternatives of Christianity or barbarism. We have followed Christianity through the centuries and through the centuries we have battled barbarism. With the Christian culture we have teamed up in the spirit of our daily activities. Today, when the country is under siege by barbarians, Poland, in that new undertaking of its freedom, marks its centuries-old conviction of returning to God. We straighten out the ways of our personal lives and the highways of our nations. We tear ourselves from sin and learn from our mistakes. The archetypical Herod’s and the Nero’s are not part of our own style and not our vocation. We must inure ourselves to Christ’s ways to have a prominence and a voice of significance in the modern world. It isn’t enough to rest our lives on fictional virtues and governed religiosity; but gain true moral worth within the spirit of faith. We need to be Christians not only by law and face value but in spirit and deed. Let us not be confused by the presence of the protective care of our Savior, when religious and national feelings predict our near freedom. Let us sanctify the New Year, in order that better times of freedom come upon us, lest worse things happen. In other years the traditional Primate’s vigil greetings were given considering the times and the actual demands of the nation. Today on this spiritual Polish day, may there be one great yearning, one collective wish, one unshackled hope, one good prayer, one sincere and common Polish vigil greeting for the resurrection of the fatherland. Let us put together prayers for freedom, with this Christmas wafer, which drips with blood. Let us place them at the feet of the Infant as a suffering prayer, that the vigil be celebrated in an atmosphere of contentment on the holy ground of our fathers, under the mark of the White Eagle. With that thought in mind, I offer greetings to the current president of the republic and his government the graces of the Holy Spirit, with national support for the rebuilding of the Nation. With that spirit I extend my wishes for the brave armed forces, that the Lord with give them courage and ultimate victory. To the nation which from the great chalice of bitterness drinks the apocalyptic pain, I wish that, in spite of the religious persecution and despite the moral executioners, we survive it all. To the prisoners, the alienated, the immigrants, may they in the New Year be rid of their yearning for freedom and their home. To the immigrants away from country I did not send a vigil wafer for it would not be from their native Poland and I offer even greater thank you for assisting those going through the tragic hour by reorganizing their efforts to help in whatever way possible. I wish for those who had to have been displaced from their country in a heroic way, attain some solace and reach Poland’s historic resurrection in time of dire need. My countrymen, may the Lord bless you on this vigil of martyrdom. Sing our carols; sing in the midst of our difficulties. Sing away at your hurts, your faith, your marriages and prayer. “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us!” It dwelt in the midst of us while we underwent the deathly struggle. It lived with us in new principles of freedom as our leader, King, and God. “Deliver us O God and bring forth among the nations in order that we would give glory to your Holy Name and were proud in praising your glory. May the Lord be blessed from century to century. And may all the people shout “So be it, Amen,Amen!” It was thus thus our Primate spoke to the world, on Christmas of the year1939! And I now repeat the timely words of the Primate to all: “In the life of Christ, the king of peace, the time between the crib and the grave was short – just about thirty three years. From Christmas to Good Friday - from the stable to Golgota was a narrow passage filled with an angry people which was the source of all man’s mistakes which made the world suffer. On that narrow path of Christ’s life, the darkness of the child-killer Herod – a traitorous Judas – a fearful Pilate, a terrible judge who wanted to be innocent of the heinous crime by washing his hands before the crowd. He washed his hands but could not wash away his guilt which transformed the narrow path to a wide way of the cross – through which went soldiers, and people, followers of the innocent teacher who preached love of God and neighbor. Ultimately among the jeers and laughter at the ultimate sacrifice, came the nailing to a wooden cross. In the end, they lifted the cross with the bloody body of Christ. Christ – the one who wished to unite heaven to earth, people with their God, was hung between heaven and earth. He hung between two thieves, robbers who made the ignominy greater. And at time, it seemed as if evil was victorious over good, the power and might and materialism took the place of goodness and mercy…as if Christ God lost to Satan and hell had won. There were left at the scene, just a small group of the faithful and among them the guilty. - I turn your attention now to other scenarios. After the world war was born a new Polish child, Poland itself. It was a birth on lands destroyed by the long imprisonment since throughout one hundred years - on lands ruined by a world war and on lands through which marched the German armies as well as Asiatics, Mongols and Moskovites. In truth the land of Poland was as impoverished as the stable in Bethlehem. Poland came back to life in the midst of hunger and deprivation, in a needy state. When it was in swaddling clothes, the Communistic Herod, worried about losing his throne, sent regiments of soldiers who had the mission of choking and conquering the newly born nation. The mission was not accomplished because the entire people, young and old, threw themselves into the defense of the country. The hordes had to all return from the gates of Warsaw to the Soviet paradise. The Polish child grew in wisdom and returned to the art of Polish national life. It dwelt between two thieves, thieves of property and human living. The newly born nation grew in strength. It became a wonder in the eyes of the world. It also suffered salt in its eyes, the Prussians and the Cossacks. It stood in the way of one or the other while holding the Cross of Christ in hand. The Russian Herod on one side and Cossack Pilate on the other side, the two greatest thieves, whose world history writes up describing their terrible deeds. What conniving, what planning and what lies, deceptions, insincerity throughout the past twenty years – years in which the Prussian eagle prepared to attack and the Asian bear prepared to jump. In the meantime, the Polish nation took the narrow path of an impoverished state relinquishing certain comforts for the benefit of coming generations. The contemporary Herod and Pilate, new enemies, signed an accord for the fourth division of the country and the fourth imprisonment, while the country wanted to live on and had a right to life as a nation. And quickly and systematically they changed their talk into deed. In September the way of the cross began for the polish people. Because of the influx of foreign peoples, Poland today is crucified. It dies in the midst of two blaspheming thieves. Thieves who do not hang on two side crosses on the left and on the right but standing at the head of two armed regiments throwing dice for a stolen land. They took the fatherland by force and began to legislate its life. Upon the vulnerable population, members of the secret police commit such heinous and cruel acts of barbarism that the actions of ancient Turks - Tatars and Cossacks are as nothing in comparison. Persecutions are systematically held according to plans drawn up the leaders. One foreign newspaper writing about the hatred of the invaders and about their vengeance notes briefly, “On a given decree, men of a certain class are rounded up and shot in public squares. On another decree all the children in a certain sector are packed into wagons used by transferring cattle by trains and driven hundreds of miles from their homes. Thirty frozen bodies of youths are removed from the train at the end of the journey. A certain policeman told the Burmeister to clean his car with his tongue. When the poor man objected, he was beaten to death. The secret police go the cloisters and gather the religious in one place and hurl obscenities upon them. Christ hung between two thieves. And the two hung on separate crosses. They were both guilty. Only one publically admitted that and maintained the innocence of Christ. Currently we see on the global Golgotha only one cross and on that cross is crucified the Polish nation. One need not have the imagination of a poet to peer through the dark clouds of the present, in order to see another scenario of the future. The Way of the Cross did not end on the Calvary Cross. It led further to the grave but ultimately to the Resurrection. Today’s tears, suffering and blood, do not end with Good Friday. They turn into a beautiful spring morning in a moment of joy and glory. On the Worldwide Calvary however, for an eternal and shameful remembrance, two crosses are left and those will be of the new, upcoming criminals and murderers who blasphemed God whom they tried to erase from souls and minds and hearts of people. Their final words will not be of sorrow or remembrance but black despair which will be, “Galilean once again You won!” In the past weeks, I received some letters from the Rumanian camps. In one of the letters was a cutout news article from a paper. Let me read to you a few sentences which brought pain to a Polish traveler. “Far away from our country, we live in midst of visions and dreams! Stamped with a foreign mark, the letters sound quiet, hopeful, - in an envelope with a white ribbon is a silent shout. Where are we? In camps, in small cubicles, on some story high, in little hotels, in sleepy foggy towns. By night we strain our eyes. We stand on hard floors or by a cold window and look at the stars which circle almost imperceptibly in the Milky Way…our eyes lock in on it…the Big Dipper has no handle – the North, it is our country. There are no cordons, bayonets, or unconcerned eyes - just peace, an unprotected greatness, the silver of space journeys. We address the *Milky Way*, the *Big Wagon*: let it take us to our loved ones. With stars in our eyes, we fall asleep.” I add, dream that over our country, joyfully and happily, with wings that soundly flutter contentment and freedom flies – the *WHITE EAGLE.*