**March 5, 1939**

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

The largest and most splendid in the whole world is the Basilica of St. Peter in the eternal city. It possesses within itself priceless treasures. In the middle ages the most renowned artist, painters and sculptors worked here in decorating this house of God and left wondrous works of art. I can say without hesitation that it is a church which is at the same time a museum that you will not find in any other country. Marble and granite altars; statues of Saints, Popes and other worthy persons; paintings and small valuable mosaics; oil paintings, works so real that they seem to come alive and join in daily life. I don’ t know where on earth you will find of marble group so beautiful and amazing as are found here among the main altar of the Cathedral of St. Peter, or the original wooden chair on which first sat the prince of the apostles. Here are put to rest the remains of Pope Paul III, who rules from 1535 to 1549. The tomb was sculpted by the artist, Wilhelm della Porta. The greatest of the sculptors was Michaelangelo. The group is of white marble. Pope Paul III is dressed in the papal clothes. The demeanor is noble, great and one of the most beautiful. It seems to be alive. Backed by the lid of the coffin, two figures are seated. They depict the characteristic virtues of the pope, namely prudence and justice. The first is a portrait of the young mother of the Pope, Joan Caetani; the second a likeness of his sister, Julia Farnese. Looking at the work it seems as if the two figures will any moment rise and walk out mixing with the sight seers on the street. Art connoisseurs and artists wonder at every facet of this group and are smitten by it. There is always a group of onlookers wondering at the work of art. I remember that when I finished my studies in Rome, a sculptor from France came to see the art. When he stood before it he fell in love with these statues of lifeless marble. Convinced that he never would be able to even come close to execution of a work like this, he ardently placed a kiss on the foreheads of the statues and took out a revolved from his pocket a shot himself. He died at the foot of this great work. Thus we come to the title of our talk:



A LIVING STATUE

Once again I turn my attention to the minds and hearts of our youth. The hand of a master sculptor, holding in his grip a mallet and chisel is capable of cutting out from inanimate marble, figures which grab us with its nobility and outlooks and its only marble, granite or stone. They are dead statues coming alive by the hands of masters created by God. I have in thought the flesh of human beings. Human flesh is the most subtle machine on earth, having the most delicate mechanism, coming from the sharpest mind. This physical flesh in itself is authored by God. The most perfect work of man, because it is made to the image of the Great Creator Himself. There is nothing unclean, or evil; all flesh is the work of God the Creator Artist. It is noble and the reason why the Apostle of the Nations in one place called the flesh of man “a personal possession of God” and in another place “the Lord’s temple.” The famous Fr. Kneipp wrote: “We will one day stand before God giving an account of how we used this flesh of ours, this house of an immortal soul and tool to carry out our obligations.” There flow certain obligations concerning the flesh, namely, every person should be concerned and care to sustain this flesh in health. If it is true as maintains the folk adage that “cleanliness is a good part of health,” then it is the obligation to keep clean the entire flesh; when I say the entire flesh, I include the lips, teeth and finger nails. I know people who shy away from the bathtub as if it were an open mouth of some kind of vicious dragon or lurking elephant trunk ready to strangle its victim to a pulp. We also have examples of people who are skimpy on brushes or tooth brushes forget about the care of the entire house, each room and especially the bedroom. One ought not to try to escape from fresh air. Isn’t it laughable that one should patch every open space leading to the outside in winter such as the keyhole in a door and the window frames so that wonderful fresh air should enter inside the home. The air in such homes is soured, heavy and dense that you could cut it in pieces. For four months the stench of fried, baked and boiled, burnt foods mix with body odors and create a trap for the health of the dwellers. I am convinced that some will take askance with me when I say that our people generally eat and drink too much. They are convinced that their stomachs are steel boilers. They pack them an overload of meets, day after day, year after year. In the end the main organ of the body’s machinery is totally ineffective. We are hesitant to understand that moderation in eating and drinking is necessary for health and extends our time on this earth. There are also diseases and sicknesses of the flesh which can be healed only with much fasting. It is worth to understand this especially when the season of Lent comes along. Besides, it is sinful for the person who does not take care of the flesh so it is the cause of sickness or does not care to seek a doctor’s help or take prescribed medications. A person ought to remember the admonition of St. Bernard: “Love your own flesh and certainly you own soul.” People, especially in our times, have lost the true meaning, the beauty and the nobility of our flesh. They themselves, with their own hands undercut these statues endowed with qualities, gifts and graces of the Creator. They do not pay attention to what is permitted or not permitted, but join in what others are thinking. That in itself is not altogether praise-worthy because although it is good, sincere, profitable and virtuous, it also possibly tempts us because it is bad for the flesh unhealthy and ruins life. I stay away from certain excesses not to offend certain sensitivities. Despite the ascertain that for the clean, everything is clean, I still have not in my life seen neither a white chimney sweep nor a walker stepping through a puddle and not soiling his shoes or boots. Therefore despite the modern motto, that sincerity and the new openness demands to say everything to everyone, I wish to put my finger on the lips and – keep quiet. Sincerity is at times naked and openness brutal. I would like to point out yet another overuse, and that is an excess of drinking. Perhaps no other thing is so deleterious to our health and happiness in life and gives such offense as the bottle and the shot glass. Instead of going to Sacred   
Scripture or to ancient works, I take a letter into hand dated February 9th and read it to you: “There are four of us in our family, Father, Mother and four sisters. The eldest is twenty five and is engaged. The second is 23 years old and is a teacher. The third is 21, and is a private secretary. I am 19 years old as studying law. My parents married 27 years ago. Those 27 years were hell due to a drinking father. Our father for some time as far back as we can remember drank and was abusive towards us. Because of this, our live at home was hell on earth instead of familial love and peace in which we would be able to live as normal human beings. No one could realize how really abusive our father was because our mother always covered up for him. There could not be a kinder father when he wasn’t drunk but that was rarely the case. Yesterday he came home beat up and drunk. He began to murmur under his nose and then shout out loud that he can do what he pleases because he is head of the household. My sister pled with him to stop shouting and sit at the table. He began to shout at the table saying that he could have another drink and no one can stop him. We were all silent. That made him angrier. He jumped from the table and came back with a strap in his hand. Swearing, he threw himself at us with fury and began lashing out with the strap. His eyes bulged and he was in a sweat but he kept on. I never saw him in such a fury. His mouth let forth spittle. I am ashamed to write these things about my own father but I can’t stand it. My elder sister who just came back from the hospital after eight weeks still week from her stay there was victim of his fury. Seeing this I took a piece of wood in desperation and wanted to split his head. But he seized it from my hands. Nevertheless we do not hate him; we do not like him nonetheless. We even feel sorry for him. We are very sorry that our mother who has to work has no appreciation but lack of peace and sorrow. Other children have good fathers; why is our father like he is. If he would only quit drinking there would be a great change in the family atmosphere. We are at a loss as what to do. - Perhaps some comment would be helpful here.

One more letter. Written with a shaky hand, having in it many tears. “Dear Father Justin:

I have an issue which greatly worries me. I am twenty years old and the eldest in the family. I have four sisters and three brothers; the youngest is just five years old. I have been working since I was 14 years old. Our father has not been working for nine years, not that he can’t find a job but that he likes to drink. He got a job working two days a week. It doesn’t matter because he drinks daily and from and is drunk from Sunday to Thursday. We were never well off, always poor, and a mother who has had worry all the time. Because of this she has heart trouble. We are devastated because we strive to make things better but father squanders our efforts on drink. What a shame.” - I don’t understand how vodka could obsess someone to the point where they become a living statue, needing to be a temple, but changes into a pigsty where there is plenty of dirt, bugs, stench and rotting.”

I’ll add another pearl. I apologize for have the gumption to express myself in this manner, but I need to. “Permit me to say something on the radio to wives and drunken fathers. I am married twenty years. In that time I have some peace only for about two months when we lived away from our fathers. At that time my wife asked me to go to our parents. I went, but I soon regret it because it was a house of cursing, vengeance taking and drunkenness. My father-in-law has two other daughters; one is already in the hospital because she caroused nights and became so ill from which she cannot recover and the second drinks like her father and my wife. In addition they tell me that whoever goes to church and gives an offering has a place assured in hell. They believe in fortune tellers and visit them.”

But, let me finish. I began to talk about dead statues, made of marble in St. Peter’s Basilica. I then spoke of the statues in the Basilica which seemingly come to life and are great and noble works of the Creator. I finished speaking of those which destroy the mind, heart, and murder the soul and beautiful statues grasping the eye, changing into dragon like creatures destroying health, peace and the happiness of others. Let us remember that “many died from excessive living styles. And so, always and everywhere and especially in Lent, we ought to train ourselves with discipline self-denial because through than discipline we ennoble and beautify livings statues.

Did you mean: [***koluszki***](javascript:void(0))

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